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ABSTRACT

The report on women with non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) in the Australian labor force was prepared to review the experience and needs of this population in recent years and to examine the various available sources of information. The first section reviews the standard statistical sources and their research methodologies. The second and third sections use these quantitative data to examine recent trends in NESB women's labor force experience. One examines the main trends in demographic and educational patterns, unemployment and self-employment patterns, and employment-related training. The other looks at the situation of NESB women in the context of the 1990-92 recession, particularly trends in unemployment, the manufacturing industry, employment patterns related to ethnic group or nationality, and women's participation in national labor market programs. The fourth section considers the value of qualitative and community-based research used in addition to quantitative data. Report-related data, data summaries, and notes on methodological issues and a bibliography are appended. A companion volume summarizes findings on specific issues and makes recommendations for policy and action. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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# Blue collar and beyond

## the experiences of non-english speaking background women in the australian labour force

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caroline alcorso and graham harrison

Commonwealth - State Council on Non-English Speaking Background
Women's Issues

# Blue Collar and Beyond

## The Experiences of Non-English Speaking Background Women in the Australian Labour Force

Caroline Alcorso and Graham Harrison
1993

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# INTRODUCTION

Employment, and more generally, labour force experience, is arguably the single main determinant of social well-being in advanced industrial societies such as Australia.

The employment experience of non-English speaking background (NESB) women has been one of the primary concerns of the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues since it was established in 1989. The first Council (1989-92) nominated employment, along with health and language services, as the three issues on which it wished to focus its attention. The second Council, which first met in July, 1992, has also identified employment as a priority area of attention.

This report was prepared in order to review the experiences of NESB women in the Australian labour force in recent years, and to describe the common sources from which information about NESB women can be drawn. In particular, it focuses on the value of qualitative and community-based research in addition to quantitative research data.

The characteristics typical of NESB women workers and their distinctive labour force situation in Australia are matters by now well-canvassed in the literature and form the subject of this report. Attention has been focused on them as a disadvantaged social group whose disadvantage is seen to stem at least partly from their positioning in the labour force. To best understand this positioning, and factors affecting it, it is necessary to examine the context of Australia's changing economy and the various reforms and policies currently being implemented in the labour market.

## Australia's economic performance

In the national arena, industrial relations and systems of work are currently subject to a variety of pressures to change. First, Australia's economy, like that of most countries, is in a recession which began in most OECD countries in 1990. Australia had relatively high rates of employment growth in the period 1980-90, although most of the new jobs created were part-time or casual ones. From 1991 on, however, net employment fell sharply, and unemployment went into 'double digit' figures for the first time since the Great Depression.

The period 1983-9 was characterised by low productivity growth, even by diminished world standards (Indecs, 1992:76-7). Indeed, Australia's low productivity growth, compared to other industrialised countries, has been cited as a threat to current living standards. Other national economic problems evident in the second half of the 1980s included the depreciation of the exchange rate, the high adverse balance of payments, the deterioration in the terms of trade, and the rising external debt. These problems increasingly attracted the attention of federal and state governments which have co-ordinated a series of macro- and micro-economic reforms aimed at overcoming them.

### Industry policy

The period of Labor government since 1983 has been marked by manufacturing industry policies of particular relevance to NESB women workers. First, there has been a relatively rapid phasing out of industry tariff protection. Secondly, there has been a series of industry plans which have provided the framework for tariff reductions and which have sought to promote economic restructuring. The plans have included new assistance arrangements designed to favour the development of higher value added, better quality, less price sensitive products, and therefore to promote exports.

In the 1950s and 1960s the development of the manufacturing industry was fostered through an array of subsidies, tariffs, bounties and quotas that lessened the threat of competition from overseas firms. While the trend since then has been for the reduction in protection, in the period 1975-85 protection actually increased for some industries, including the clothing and footwear industries (Indecs, 1992:288).

Since 1984-5 a phased reduction in protection has been instituted, usually in the context of tripartite, negotiated industry plans. The acknowledged consequence has been a reduction of jobs in the relevant industries. To offset this, some plans have included labour adjustment packages of unprecedented generosity for retrenched workers[1]. Twice in recent years (in 1988 and 1991) the Federal Government has revised and increased the speed of tariff reduction. It is now envisaged that by July, 1996, protection to the manufacturing industry will average only 5 per cent.

### Award restructuring

The reform of industrial relations, under successive 'Accords,' has been specifically designed (and justified) in terms of improving productivity, and hence living standards. Since 1987, the granting of national wage increases has been partly based on employers and employees taking steps that would lead to greater productivity and reduce costs. In 1988, this was formalised in the Industrial Relations Commission's Structural Efficiency Principle. A number of steps designed to promote the flexibility of work practices in an industry were set down, and the dependence of wage rises on workplace and award reform was entrenched.

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[1] The TCF Labour Adjustment Package, for example, includes income support (regardless of a partner's earnings) of up to 52 weeks formal training and up to 104 weeks where a mixture of preparatory and formal vocational training was required (Yeatman, 192:68). It should be noted, however, that considerable difficulties, referred to in Section 4, exist for NESB women in gaining access to these benefits, thereby limiting the value of the package.

Since this time, the main initiative used to bring about greater productivity at the industry level has been award restructuring. This process entails a revision of existing industrial awards with the aim of greatly reducing the number of wage-skill levels, increasing the number of tasks that can be performed by workers within each level (that is, 'broad-banding')[2] and removing other work and management practices that are considered to be barriers to efficiency. While the process has obvious benefits for employers, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Federal Government have consistently argued that award restructuring can offer many benefits to all workers, including lower-paid workers and women. According to the Women's Bureau in the Federal Government Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET):

> The process of award restructuring has the potential to provide workers with more meaningful and better paid work, and greater mobility in the labour market (DEET, 1990:Foreword).

Indeed, the ACTU argues that the Minimum Rates Adjustment process, which it embarked on as part of award restructuring, has been extremely important in addressing the historic undervaluation of women's skills. This process, now completed in the major industries employing women, involves work value cases before the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) in which benchmark classifications in predominantly female industries are evaluated against classifications in awards for male-dominated industries.

### Enterprise bargaining

Very recently, further reforms to the industrial relations system have been encouraged. A new federal wage-fixing system known as enterprise bargaining was accepted by the IRC in 1991 and then formalised in the Industrial Relations Amendment Act, 1992. This Act lays down guidelines for enterprise-based bargaining and details the future role of the IRC. This national legislation moves almost as far as some of the state legislation (for example, in NSW) in terms of decentralising industrial relations, encouraging collective bargaining and restricting the role of tribunals. As noted in a recent economic analysis: 'More flexibility exists (in Australian industrial relations) than at any time in nearly two decades' (Indecs, 1992:58). Unions, however, have a more central place in federal than in state legislation.

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[2] Although note that in some areas of women's employment, unions have successfully argued that award restructuring should involve *increasing* the number of occupational classifications and *narrowing* the tasks carried out in each.

At the current time, two processes for determining wages and working conditions co-exist; national and state wage cases, linked to the award structure, and enterprise-based agreements. So far, most of the agreements reached have represented relatively highly-paid and well-organised male workers; first and foremost in the metals industry. However, conservative estimates suggest that by mid-1993, 50 per cent of Australian workers will be covered by enterprise agreements (Indecs, 1992:57).

At the time of its decision, the IRC expressed misgivings about the impact of enterprise bargaining on women workers:

> We cannot predict the extent of the disadvantage which female workers will experience if the Commission gives its approval to a scheme of enterprise bargaining. We do accept, however, that enterprise bargaining - especially bargaining for over-award payments - places at a relative disadvantage those sections of the labour force where women predominate (cited in Women's Electoral Lobby, 1992:1).

## Competency-based education and training

Another integral part of the tripartite agenda for increasing Australia's international competitiveness and boosting productivity levels during the second half of the 1980s has been the promotion of vocational education and training. Initiatives have been undertaken to create a national training infrastructure, under the auspices of the National Training Board which was established in 1989. Agreement from the state governments was obtained in 1990 for the adoption of competency-based training as the basis for delivering and accrediting training across Australia. A competency-based approach was to apply also to the recognition of immigrants' overseas skills. The adoption of a competency-based approach means that skills are assessed in terms of outcomes and capacities, rather than years of training or formal qualifications. It has therefore been seen as having considerable potential for increasing the value attached to women's traditionally undervalued skills and to improving the recognition of the often underutilised skills of immigrants.

Accompanying this creation of a national training system has been the emphasis on the development of skill-related career paths through award restructuring. The latter has been used as the incentive to encourage employers to invest more in training their workforces, which, while smaller than before, will be able to operate comfortably in more technologically advanced workplaces (see Yeatman, 1992:1). Thus, for example, the new Victorian Clerical and Administrative Employees Award opens up a clear career path in which women can move through seven grades of clerical and administrative work by utilising agreed upon vocational training appropriate to each level (Probert and Wajcman, 1991:2). Similar concepts are embodied in the new clothing industry award, which has eight graduated levels based on the attainment of common, specified competencies (see Yeatman, 1992: 76-7).

## This report

> Continuing micro-economic reform is necessary to shape an economy which can deliver durable improvements in the day-to-day lives of Australians - more jobs, more work satisfaction, greater growth, fewer people dependent on welfare and a capacity to afford adequate assistance for the truly needy. Micro reform serves, very profoundly, human needs (Bob Hawke, Statement on Microecomic Reform, 10 April, 1989).

Some of the main economic and industrial developments of recent years have been outlined above to provide a context for analysing NESB women's employment. Many of these developments, in vocational training, industrial relations and the government's economic policies, are seen to offer potential benefits to all workers. At the same time, the small body of qualitative reports on the topics that have been produced so far, as well as the recounted experience of those affected by these reforms, suggests that there are many barriers to the realisation of those potential benefits in the case of women workers. The overall shift can be summed up as the 'pursuit of the level playing field'; the ideology is that by removing or limiting government intervention and controls, market-based economic forces will be free to operate, resulting in overall economic well-being and the well-being of the population. But is everyone's well-being served? And will social costs also be borne equally?

In some analyses it is accepted that certain individuals may suffer as a result of micro-economic reforms that serve majority interests. The need to compensate those individuals is therefore acknowledged, as in the TCF package described above. Obtaining 'positive outcomes' from such packages may be difficult, however, in a depressed economy. Moreover, the consequences of economic changes on vulnerable social groups may frequently be beyond either the view or the reach of government.

There is a need for clear analysis of the situation of NESB women in relation to award restructuring, enterprise bargaining, competency-based education and training and micro-economic policy generally. It is certainly important that NESB women's interests within these various debates be asserted. However, it should not be assumed that these issues are as immediate for NESB women as they are for Australian employers, for example, or for more highly paid tradespeople in the metals industry who are typically men.

This report contends that some of the most important employment issues for NESB women remain those less 'fashionable' issues, such as unemployment, English classes, occupational injury and marginalisation. *These* issues must be addressed now if NESB women are to access and benefit from the above-mentioned programs and policies. It is therefore essential that they continue to be identified and advocated at a government level.

This report is a valuable starting point for discussion and action on both the tasks described above. However, it does not pretend to be an end point in itself. It is a combination of further analysis, consultation, implementation strategies, on-going evaluation techniques and determination that can move us collaboratively towards such end points. The Council sees this document and the accompanying ***Strategies for Action*** as central to this process.

## SECTION 1: COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA ON NESB WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE

This section looks at the ways in which we gain our information about NESB women[1] in the workplace. It deals with the standard data sources for NESB women's employment; evaluating their strengths and weaknesses, and examining some of the approaches for handling such data.

### *Standard statistical sources on NESB women in the labour force*

The following are basic statistical sources that can be used for the study of women of non-English speaking background in the workforce.

- ABS censuses of population and housing
- ABS regular labour force surveys
- Other ABS surveys and collections on specific topics

Records from other government agencies, such as those listed below are a subsidiary source.

- DILGEA's settlement data base
- AMIS (Adult Migrant English Program Information System)
- DEET - Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) registrations
- Department of Social Security (DSS) - benefit recipients
- State government collections, such as the NSW Equal Employment Opportunity Surveys.

### *ABS Censuses of Population and Housing*

The population census is the largest statistical collection in Australia, involving a survey of every household in Australia. A census has been carried out every five years since 1961 and was held on a less regular basis prior to that.

The census is carried out using a large number of temporary census collectors. The questionnaire is given to each householder with an explanatory leaflet, and collected about a week later. The collection is designed in such a way that the householder can complete the form with minimum assistance from the collector. There is a hotline telephone service and a telephone translator service available during this time. Because the questionnaire is completed by the householder, the number of questions asked is limited (38 in 1986, 43 in 1991), and they are easy to answer. The non-response rate for individual questions typically ranges from 4 per cent to 12 per cent.

It is the largest and most comprehensive statistical collection in Australia.

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[1] See overleaf brief section which discusses some of the definitional issues associated with the term, 'NESB'.

### *The term 'NESB women'*

The term 'NESB women' is used in this report, as in many others, as a shorthand to refer to overseas born women from non-English speaking countries.

Origin or birthplace, language and period of residence have been the three main indicators used in the examination of disadvantage faced by immigrants. The standard Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition is that NESB refers to all immigrants who were born in countries other than the UK, Ireland, Canada, the USA, New Zealand or South Africa[2].

The definition is inexact both in terms of those it wrongly includes and those it excludes. In some cases these inaccuracies can distort the results. Moreover, individuals wrongly excluded or included from birthplace-based definitions may have understandable objections to their use.

For example, one group wrongly *in*cluded is people whose families have migrated to an English speaking country, prior to coming to Australia, such as:

- South Asian-background women arriving from the UK
- Pacific Islander-background women arriving from New Zealand
- Italian-background women arriving from the USA.

Clearly, these are non-English speaking background immigrants but would not appear as 'NESB' according to a birthplace or origin-based definition.

A group wrongly *ex*cluded is that of minority, or Aboriginal or other indigenous communities. Examples where immigrants from countries classified as English speaking are non-Anglophone include:

- Francophone Canadians
- Afrikaans-speaking South Africans
- New Zealand Maoris

In terms of labour force experience these groups appear to be quite different, yet all would be classed as 'ESB' according to the standard definitions.

In addition there is the category of people born in NES countries whose parents are of English speaking background. An example would be the children of Australian service personnel serving in Papua New Guinea.

A further problem is that the range of people who qualify for the definition 'NESB' is so wide that, lumped together, they may create aggregate results that mask important differences within the group. In this paper, *disaggregated* data will be used in many places to highlight this point and reference will be made to issues where the use of the crude categorisation between NESB, ESB and Australian born women masks, rather than highlights diversity.

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[2] NESB is also commonly used to refer to *second generation* people of a non-English speaking background. In this report, however, the 'B' is 'birthplace' rather than 'background'.

However, the number and complexity of the questions asked is limited. The key variables of relevance to ethnicity questions that were collected in the 1986 Census were:

- birthplace[3], language, period of residence, level of English language competence, religion and birthplace of parents, and a series of occupation/labour market variables.

The items in the 1986 Census which had not been collected in 1981 were ancestry and language spoken at home. Language had been collected in 1976 but there was some concern with its quality because of issues such as students putting down languages they were studying at school.

The ancestry question[4] constitutes an attempt to identify groups within the English speaking population who may have a more distant minority ethnic background, such as third generation NESB groups born in Australia, Welsh immigrants and so on. It was expected that respondents would consider their grandparents' ethnicity. Due to problems with the responses to the question, it was not continued into the 1991 Census and is not likely to be reintroduced. However the language question was retained.
For this study, the data of most interest are the cross-classified tables involving birthplace, sex and labour force status. These are of two types:

- Standard tables which were produced soon after the census in response to a set of written requests collected in advance. There are a large number of these tables, and most are available on microfiche or magnetic tape.

- Special tables which are produced at various times after the census in response to specific requests. These are usually available on magnetic tape only.

For most of these tables, the geographic area is the state. A list showing the cross-classified tables which are available from the census and involving birthplace, sex and labour force status as variables is presented in Appendix C. It is still possible to request cross-tabulations from the 1986 Census. For the 1991 Census, it is expected that there will be relatively few standard cross-tabulations produced; special cross-tabulations are much more readily accessible on floppy disc.

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[3] In the 1980s steps were taken to ensure that administrative records contained information that could be assessed in terms of ethnicity. Whilst a number of approaches were examined, the competing requirements of ease of collection, which would enhance compliance, ease of comparability and the costs involved, led to a situation where birthplace became the most commonly used indicator.

There are a number of ways in which birthplace and language data can be recorded. These are discussed in some detail in Appendix B.

[4] The question was simply 'What is each person's ancestry?
for example Greek, English, Indian, Armenian, Aboriginal, Chinese etc...'

### *ABS monthly labour force surveys*

The labour force survey is the largest household survey carried out by the ABS. The questionnaire is administered to a sample of around one-third of 1 per cent of households in Australia. There is a large amount of data available in publications, on microfiche and in special tabulations.

The sample is stratified both geographically and by dwelling type. The questionnaire is administered by trained interviewers who guide each respondent through the questions. The questionnaire is quite long and some of the questions are complex. Because of the interviewer's involvement, the response rates to questions and the accuracy of response are very high. Interviewers ask for details of all persons in the household aged 15 or over, but may gain this information from interviewing just one adult from the household[5].

The ABS produces a wide range of publications and microfiche from the labour force survey. The cross-classified tables that include birthplace and sex and which are readily available are listed in Appendix D. It is also possible to request special tabulations from this survey.

### *ABS special surveys*

As part of its household survey program, the ABS carries out many supplementary surveys. Some of these are held at regular intervals, some are irregular or a once-off exercise. The publications which tabulate the results of these surveys are listed in the ABS Catalogue of Publications, no. 1101.1, under 'Labour force'.

Some which contain detail on ethnicity and gender include:

- Job search experience of unemployed persons (no. 6222.0)
- Labour force status and other characteristics of families (no 6224.0)
- Labour force status and other characteristics of migrants (no 6250.0)

### *Comparing the data sources*

The census is the only collection that has detailed data on small geographic areas and on a wide range of population sub-groups. In the context of this study, it is the source for the most detailed ethnicity information. It is also the source that is the closest to a complete enumeration of the population under study. As such the method required to analyse the data and the way in which inferences can be drawn is quite different from the appropriate way to handle the labour force survey material.

The census is, however, taken only every five years and has an effective delay of almost two years from the time of collection to the emergence of the kind of data germane to NESB women in an useable form.

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[5] Where this occurs, there may be more reason to suspect the accuracy of men's comments about women than that of women's comments about men.

The monthly surveys of the labour force, with their associated supplementary surveys, are taken more frequently and processed more speedily, but suffer from the problems of being a sample. This is particularly important when focussing attention on relatively small groups in the population, be they geographic regions or particular ethnic groups. The surveys, by themselves, do not sufficient information to monitor and explore the topics because they must aggregate groups within the subject populations whose characteristics may be so different that an average figure for the aggregation can be meaningless.

The great advantage of the surveys is that they can concentrate on particular subjects and ask a series of interelated questions in some considerable detail, which often reveals relationships that are not available in any other form. They are regular and contain core information and there is an established mechanism for introducing more specific studies into an existing framework. Their weakness is that the numbers for small groups are too small to enable the researcher to do much with them.

In addition, all these sources provide only static snap-shots, from which a picture of what happens to immigrants over time has to be built up through laborious comparisons using data such as period of arrival. Appendix E details two studies that have been designed, from the outset, to follow immigrant groups over a period of time.

There are a number of databases developed and held by public sector agencies containing useful information that are not being accessed[6]. Typically they are utilised for general reports which do not make use of the birthplace variable contained in them. Others are not made available in a suitable form for their incorporation into other work. The unreliabilty of administrative records, often resulting from the relationship between clients and the agency, should be noted.

### *Methodological issues relating to data collection*
### *Census data*

Because censuses are an almost total count, the sampling issue does not arise. However, other issues relating to the quality (coverage and accuracy) of the data require some discussion.

One issue is the extent to which the non-responses (be it non-return of the whole form, or non-response to particular questions) are concentrated amongst particular groups, such as NESB women. Indeed, the factors most likely to lead to underenumeration are often found amongst particular immigrant groups. These include communication problems, fear of giving information to government officials and difficulty in making contact because of high degrees of mobility and irregular hours.

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[6] In the 1980s steps were taken to ensure that administrative records contained information that could be analysed in terms of ethnicity. Whilst a number of approaches were examined, the competing requirement of ease of collection, which enhances compliance, ease of comparability and cost, led to a situation where birthplace became the most commonly used indicator.

However, there is no evidence that the magnitude of this problem is large. Post-enumeration surveys and other data suggest that it is small. The overall quality of the census collections is impressive and they provide the best source of information on the subject matter they address.

The other point that has to be addressed is whether the data collected is accurate; for example, whether income is correctly recorded, and how it is to be interpreted. Of the ethnicity variables the only one where there is substantial discussion of quality is level of English language competence, though other methodological questions have surfaced in the past.

Problems with specific aspects of the data are not so great as to warrant not using them. Indeed there is a great deal of information, as yet unanalysed, which could be used to address specific questions relating to NESB women's employment. The bulk of the general analysis has been done by the various researchers in the field. Appendix F presents the results of a creative use use of ABS census data to examine at a detailed level occupational and industrial patterns for a specific region: two rural council areas in North West Victoria.

### *Labour force survey data*

Possible underenumeration of certain groups due to biased sampling processes within labour force surveys is a problem not found in censuses. Appendix G addresses this issue by matching labour force data with other data. The conclusion there is that there appears to be an improvement in the way in which the labour force survey 'captures' members of ethnic groups.

This matching of the two sets of data is an example of the sort of monitoring that should continue to be carried out. It is important to assure people that the results of particular surveys can be treated as representative, to a sufficient degree to enable their use in assessing the particular issue at hand.

Appendix H examines possible biases against NESB women emanating from the sampling frame the ABS uses in labour force surveys. Because the sampling frame over-represents people from smaller states, it tends to under-represent women from NESB. The effect is that the *error* attached to the use of NESB employment figures from the surveys is larger than for other groups. Consequently, many small figures are suppressed (and shown in tables as asterisks) by the ABS.

NESB women are a group whose proportion in the total population is little more than 5 per cent. The small size of this proportion creates difficulties in the reliability of the survey findings. A relatively large range of values in a sample may all be consistent with a true proportion because of the large margin of error when generalising from small figures.

The general conclusion is that whilst some bias against the selection of immigrant households does exist within the labour force survey procedures, this bias is not likely to lead to any major distortions in the overall results.

### *Administrative records data*

Administrative records, such as those kept by the DSS or DILGEA, are designed to allow government to monitor specific programs in relation to budgets. As a result of Access and Equity programs at the state and federal levels, it is becoming more common for ethnicity data to be collected, although in many key areas (for example, occupational injury) data collections recording ethnicity indicators remain scant.

One of the main problems, however, is that such data is not directly comparable with ABS or other government data. In Section 3, attention is drawn to the limitations of DEET data on Labour Market Program participants. Appendix I examines CES data in an attempt to discover the proportion of CES registrants in relation to the numbers of NESB residents in regions of Sydney.

### *Methodological issues involved in analysis and use of existing data*

In handling any statistics we need to ask a series of basic questions:

- How many people are there of a particular type and what is their background?
- Are the proportions in different groups different? How do we measure these? To what extent can we make conclusions on the basis of the evidence available?
- What program outcomes do we wish to achieve? How can these be monitored, now and in the future?

### *The 'significance' of findings*

The analysis of large-scale statistics often leads to arguments about whether the differences are worth reporting and acting on. The question of 'significance', either from a statistical or from a policy perspective is important here. In the area of NESB female employment the discussion often relates to the significance of apparent differences between those who migrate and those who were born in Australia.

There are two main reasons that differences between groups are not established as being 'significant' in this context. Both relate to the size of the group being assessed. The first relates to the process of information collection, and is discussed above.

The second issue relates to the consequence of comparing groups whose *other* characteristics, at the aggregate level, 'explain away' apparent differences in a particular variable.

In many cases treating people from NESB as if they were the same as the overall group for the purposes of measuring other indicators can be quite misleading.

For example, the age structure of the overseas born population results in a relatively high proportion of elderly compared to the Australian born population. This means that the use of aggregate figures when comparing immigrants to the Australian born, for any characteristic that is affected by age, is not valid. Wherever a characteristic is in some way correlated with age, there is the possibility that the average for the migrant group is artificially different from the overall average. In some cases the difference between the two groups has the direction of its trend reversed, merely as a consequence of the age structure.

This can be demonstrated quite simply in the case of unemployment rates, as derived from the 1986 Census. The table below shows that the unemployment rate for the overseas born was 8.7 per cent, 34 per cent above the figure for the Australian born of 6.5 per cent. But for each age group the overseas rate was higher than the Australian born rate by a greater percentage than this figure of 34.

***Table 1: Age group unemployment rates of Australian and overseas born women***

| Age | Australia | Overseas | % difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-19 | 16.5 | 22.3 | 35 |
| 20-24 | 8.9 | 15.3 | 72 |
| 25-34 | 5.5 | 9.9 | 80 |
| 35-44 | 3.7 | 6.8 | 84 |
| 45-54 | 3.4 | 6.2 | 80 |
| 55+ | 1.8 | 6.2 | 244 |
| Total | 6.5 | 8.7 | 34 |

Source: ABS 1986 Census of Population and Housing

Thus the overseas born unemployment rate, whilst above the Australian born figure, is not a true reflection of unemployment in each of the age groups. Only in the group with the highest level of unemployment, those aged between 15 and 19, is the proportionate difference similar. In all other age groups it is at least twice the figure for the total.

In all cases the percentage difference is greater than for the overall figure, merely because the age structure of the immigrant group is such that it is concentrated in the age groups that have lower rates of unemployment. Clearly, treating overseas born women as a group demographically similar to the Australian born can be misleading.

### *'Controlling' for difference*

A consequence of accepting this approach is the common attempt to 'control' for a range of factors that might of themselves impact on employment experience such as age, marital status and other demographic variables. However, once a number of factors are taken into account the likelihood that any difference is 'significant' is reduced and there is the temptation to say 'once X and Y are taken into account, there is no significant difference between NESB women and other people'. This practice tends to risk 'explaining away' all of the differences that characterise the NESB immigrant population, hence losing the sense of the significant issues that may arise from the differences. This is particularly dangerous when variables such as years of schooling, or English proficiency are held constant.

As Castles and Jakubowicz have argued:

> by holding specific group characteristics constant in the name of comparability ... the historical recruitment of migrant labour is made meaningless. The whole point about labour recruitment is that it does *not* lead to migrant populations similar to the host populations (1986:19).

An alternative approach would not start from the premise that there are no differences, or assume that apparent differences are merely a consequence of normal sampling procedures or within acceptable bounds. Rather, it would begin with observations 'on the ground' and the issues thought to warrant examination. It would then seek to establish the extent to which such statistical data *as is available* is consistent with the observations or the problems as they have been articulated. All four sources of information: censuses, labour force surveys, administrative records and qualitative studies, are needed to obtain a multi-dimensional perspective.

### *Using the category 'NESB women'*

The problems entailed in treating the heterogenous group, 'NESB women' as a single group have already been raised. One example here, showing differential unemployment rates, will highlight this point.

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*Table 2: Unemployment rates by birthplace, 1986*

| Birthplace | Standard rate % | Age-corrected rate % |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 9.1 | 8.7 |
| ESCs | 9.0 | 10.0 |
| NESCs | 12.9 | 15.3 |
| Italy | 5.7 | 7.6 |
| Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania | 5.3 | 9.4 |
| Hong Kong | 9.0 | 9.5 |
| Netherlands | 7.4 | 9.9 |
| Greece | 8.4 | 11.3 |
| New Zealand | 12.6 | 12.2 |
| Poland | 14.0 | 19.2 |
| Lebanon | 32.8 | 30.8 |
| Turkey | 33.6 | 30.9 |
| Vietnam | 41.3 | 42.1 |

Source: 1986 Census of Population and Housing

### *Access to data*

Another issue of importance is the accessibility of the data that exists and its cost.

Many of the arguments in this report lead to calls for increased data collection. It is important, in many cases, to encourage the collection of information about the language people are speaking, as well as their birthplace, if one mechanism for redressing existing inequity is through timely access to relevant information.

In those areas where it is impossible or impractical to collect such information, it is nevertheless important to collect the birthplace information at as disaggregated a level as possible. It is also necessary to ensure that such detail is not destroyed or discarded at the stage of recording.

The counter argument regarding the collection of information on gender and birthplace, is that to do so is not cost-effective as much of it is not used. This argument implies in the first instance a decline in the quality and coverage of the information, and possibly to the cessation of the collection.

Making use of the data that is collected is the best way to ensure that it continues to be gathered. However, much of this information needs to be used by those who understand the subject matter and the issues, rather than by those carrying out 'black box' analyses. There is a growing feeling that too often statistical material is processed through complex methodologies that at the end of the day produce results at variance with what people know is happening 'on the ground'. Some reasons for this will be touched on in Section 4 of this report.

This report argues that NESB women themselves, and those working at the community level, are experts in relation to the issues at hand. Making the analysis and manipulation of statistical information more accessible to them is a priority.

### *Conclusion*

There are in Australia, several large-scale sources of statistical data containing information about NESB women in the labour force. This section of the report has examined some of their strengths and weaknesses, from a practical and methodological point of view.

It seems that, despite certain reservations about the data collection processes used by the ABS, census and labour force survey data are very good sources of information for those interested in NESB women's employment. Typically, however, it is necessary to build up a picture of the specific topic of interest from several statistical sources. It is more productive to do this, as demonstrated in Appendices F and J, in response to, and when guided by, specific research questions. The community sector should be recognised as an increasingly fruitful source of the generation of such research questions.

The following two sections of the report use quantitative statistical data to examine recent trends in NESB women's labour force experience. Section 4 demonstrates the richness of the analyses that have been produced by researchers conducting qualitative research at the community level.

## SECTION 2: NESB WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR FORCE: MAIN TRENDS

This section summarises the main trends in NESB women's employment experience, drawing mainly from published and unpublished ABS statistical information.

### Demographic and education patterns

#### *Recent immigration trends*

Australian NESB women currently comprise around 12.5 per cent of the female population. During the 1980s, the overseas born component of the female population grew at more than double the rate of the locally born population. Moreover, the composition of the female settler intake of the 1980s altered, becoming dominated by NESB women who represented two-thirds of the total from 1987 - 1991. By 1990 there were more than 1,000,000 NESB women in Australia - a 40 per cent increase from 1981 compared to a 17.6 per cent increase in size of the ESB female population (figures derived from ABS, Brisbane, 1992:10). Increasingly, female NESB immigrants have been born in Asia.

Women currently make up just over half of settler arrivals[1] to Australia. This parity in men's and women's immigration during the 1980s reverses the patterns of earlier decades when more men than women emigrated to Australia. In the 1960s, for example, 87 women emigrated for every 100 men (DILGEA, 1989:33).

Less well-known is the fact that there have been two recent periods - both post-recessionary periods - when *more* women than men have come to Australia. These were the second half of the 1970s and the middle years of the 1980s.

Women from different birthplaces tend to utilise different immigration categories when emigrating to Australia For example, Hong Kong and Chinese born women are heavily over-represented in the employer nominee and business categories, although the numbers are small (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:7). Fewer NESB women enter Australia under the skilled migration categories than under family migration and refugee migration.

In the years 1986-8 only approximately one-third of female settler arrivals reported being in the workforce prior to arrival; however, a further third were outside the main workforce age group of 15-59 years. Thus, over half of female settler arrivals of workforce age reported having a paid occupation prior to arrival (DILGEA, 1989:43).

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[1] Persons arriving in Australia with migrant visas, regardless of stated intended period of stay; New Zealanders who express a wish to settle; and others eligible to settle (e.g. overseas-born children of Australian citizens).

### *Age*

The population of NESB women has quite a distinctive age structure. This, in turn, has a bearing on how all labour force statistics are interpreted. Generally, it can be said that NESB women are concentrated in the post-25 years age group. Roughly 33 per cent of NESB women are in the 30-44 year group while this age group only includes 20 per cent of Australian born women (Alcorso and Schofield, 1991:9). The median age for NESB women is 40.3 years, compared to 28.5 years for Australian born women (ABS, 1989:49). However, there is considerable variation within the age structure of NESB women. For some groups (for example, Turkish, Lebanese and women from most Asian countries) the median age is much lower, while for European women, it is higher.

### *Marital status of NESB women*

Overall there have always been more married women coming to Australia than married men, and indeed the immigration program in Australia has tended to select for married women, who have typically arrived as dependents.

There has also been the pattern of men emigrating as bachelors, returning to their country of origin to marry and then returning to Australia with their wives. As their migration category will have changed to 'Australian resident returning', they will not appear again in the tables of settler arrivals. A second group of immigrants, mostly men, goes overseas to get married, but not to their country of origin. Both of these trends increases the proportion of married women to married men appearing in immigration statistics.

At the time of the 1986 Census, and controlling for age, NESB women as a group were more likely to be married than Australian born and other ESB women (see below).

**Table 3: Marriage rates by birthplace, 1986, controlling for age**

| Birthplace | Proportion married (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 54.2 |
| English speaking countries | 60.2 |
| Non-English speaking countries | 69.4 |
| All | 57.0 |

Source: derived from ABS, Brisbane, 1992:15

For some groups, the proportions were much higher, especially those from Southern Europe and West Asia (78 per cent and 73 per cent respectively). The majority of NESB women are married to overseas born men. NESB women are also less likely to be divorced than ESB women.

Changes in the marital status of NESB women in Australia reflect changes in both the age structure of the migration stream as well as global changes in marriage patterns and immigration policy. Small changes in the characteristics of specific cohorts of NESB women are significant in that they may affect the nature of their participation in the workforce in Australia. Between the period 1970-88, 110 married females arrived in Australia for every 100 married men (DILGEA, 1989). The proportion of single female immigrants has, however, increased over time, particularly for certain age groups. An analysis of DILGEA consolidated statistics shows that the proportion of the female 30-34 age group that is married has been dropping in the mid 1980s from the 84 per cent figure of earlier periods.

### *Schooling and qualifications of NESB women*

1986 figures show that NESB women were less likely to have attained a post-school qualification than Australian born or ESB women - 22 per cent compared with 27 per cent for ESB women and 23 per cent for Australian born women. These small aggregate differences mask very significant variations between birthplace groups, with Southern European women and Turkish and Lebanese women having lower average educational levels. The birthplace groups with the lowest numbers of women having attained a post-school qualification in 1986 were Malta (17 per cent) and Greece (18 per cent) (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:15).

However, the level of formal schooling of both female and male NESB immigrants to Australia has increased fairly consistently during the post-war period. This has been the result of improved educational opportunities in source countries and different criteria for immigrant selection on the part of the Australian government.

Among recent arrivals (those with less than 5 years residence in 1987), 42 per cent of NESB women have a post-school qualification, compared to 19 per cent of those who had been here for 20-25 years (ABS, 1989:85)[2]. The average for the Australian born population, was around 35 per cent in 1987 (ABS, 1989:19). Fewer NESB than ESB recent arrivals held a post-school qualification. Also fewer NESB women than NESB men held a post-school qualification.

The number of years of schooling, as well as the gaining of a post-school qualification, is likely to affect labour market outcomes for NESB women, although a direct relationship may not be immediately evident. The extent of school attendance (either overseas or in Australia) may influence a woman's ability to learn English proficiently and/or pursue further education.

There is, however, a considerable degree of diversity in the amount of schooling completed between different age and birthplace groups of NESB women.

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[2] Figures in this section refer to those 15 years and over.

**Table 4: Years of schooling by age of selected birthplace groups: women, 1986**

| **Age Total** | | **Total** | **Aust** | **OSB** | **Vietnam** | **Lebanon** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left school aged | < 13 | 2.4 | 0.8 | 7.3 | 5.9 | 7.0 |
| | 13-16 | 62.7 | 65.8 | 53.2 | 19.8 | 40.1 |
| | 17-18 | 21.7 | 21.2 | 23.3 | 24.1 | 18.3 |
| | >19 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 5.8 | 23.0 | 7.0 |
| Still at school | | 4.6 | 5.3 | 2.5 | 9.8 | 4.0 |
| Did not go to school | | 0.9 | 0.3 | 2.7 | 6.7 | 16.1 |
| Not stated | | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.1 | 10.6 | 7.5 |

| **Age 15-29** | | **Total** | **Aust** | **OSB** | **Vietnam** | **Lebanon** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left school aged | < 13 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 1.4 | 4.7 | 4.5 |
| | 13-16 | 45.0 | 46.0 | 39.8 | 18.6 | 42.2 |
| | 17-18 | 33.1 | 32.6 | 35.4 | 25.5 | 24.9 |
| | > 19 | 2.6 | 1.6 | 7.2 | 17.3 | 7.7 |
| Still at school | | 14.4 | 15.2 | 10.7 | 19.1 | 9.6 |
| Did not go to school | | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 3.7 | 4.3 |
| Not stated | | 4.3 | 4.2 | 4.8 | 11.1 | 6.9 |

| **Age 30-39** | | **Total** | **Aust** | **OSB** | **Vietnam** | **Lebanon** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left school aged | < 13 | 1.5 | 0.3 | 4.5 | 6.0 | 8.3 |
| | 13-16 | 62.6 | 66.7 | 51.7 | 19.8 | 43.6 |
| | 17-18 | 27.8 | 27.2 | 29.2 | 25.4 | 18.1 |
| | > 19 | 3.7 | 0.5 | 9.5 | 34.2 | 10.0 |
| Still at school | | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Did not go to school | | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 5.3 | 12.5 |
| Not stated | | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 | 9.1 | 7.3 |

| **Age 40-49** | | **Total** | **Aust** | **OSB** | **Vietnam** | **Lebanon** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left school aged | < 13 | 3.6 | 0.6 | 10.0 | 6.5 | 8.1 |
| | 13-16 | 73.4 | 80.4 | 57.9 | 21.9 | 40.1 |
| | 17-18 | 15.8 | 13.9 | 20.0 | 21.8 | 13.8 |
| | > 19 | 2.0 | 0.6 | 5.2 | 28.9 | 4.8 |
| Still at school | | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| Did not go to school | | 1.1 | 0.4 | 2.6 | 9.6 | 25.5 |
| Not stated | | 4.1 | 4.0 | 4.3 | 11.0 | 7.8 |

| **Age 60+** | | **Total** | **Aust** | **OSB** | **Vietnam** | **Lebanon** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Left school aged | < 13 | 4.1 | 2.3 | 0.6 | 10.8 | 8.7 |
| | 17-18 | 9.0 | 7.9 | 12.6 | 12.2 | 6.2 |
| | > 19 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 2.7 | 8.6 | 2.1 |
| Still at school | | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 1.4 | 0.1 |
| Did not go to school | | 1.6 | 0.5 | 5.1 | 30.6 | 44.7 |
| Not Stated | | 9.9 | 10.5 | 8.0 | 14.1 | 9.6 |

One of the starting points to assess what the basic education attained by women is the variable 'Age Left School' from 1986 Census data. The Census table shown above puts a scale to the differences between educational experience amongst five categories of women, for five age groups.

The first section of the table shows a variation in the proportion of women who had never been to school from 0.3 per cent for those born in Australia to 6.7 per cent for those born in Vietnam and 16.1 per cent for those born in Lebanon.

In terms of those who had not progressed in their schooling beyond the age of 13 years, the cumulative figure varied from 1.1 per cent for the Australian born to 10 per cent for the overseas born. The figures for Vietnam and the Lebanon, though higher than for Australian born, were lower than that for the overseas born as a whole. But when added to those who did not go to school at all, they show that 12.6 per cent of those born in Vietnam and 23.1 per cent of those born in the Lebanon did not stay at school past the age of 13.

At the other end of the scale, whilst only 1 per cent of the Australian born had stayed at school past the age of 19, this was the case for nearly 6 per cent of the overseas born. This compared with 7 per cent for those born in the Lebanon and 23 per cent for those born in Vietnam. These high school-leaving ages are partly a consequence of deferred education post-arrival in Australia.

Looking at the individual age groups, the Vietnamese have the highest proportion of the five groups aged 15-29 years still at school and the Lebanese have the lowest. Conclusions about the meaning of this difference would have to be made in the context of the different age distributions of the two birthplace groups within the 15-29 age group.

Amongst the 30-39 age group for Vietnam and Lebanon respectively, the proportions who did not go to school were ten and twenty-five times the average. Over a third of Vietnamese born women in this age group had been at school after the age of 19 years while this was so for only 10 per cent of those born in Lebanon.

Amongst the over 60 age group more than 30 per cent of Vietnamese women and almost 45 per cent of women born in Lebanon had not been to school. The figure for those born in Australia was 0.5 per cent.

The effect of historic events such as war, as well as the changing socio-economic background of immigrants from one country may be seen in these very different levels of education received by different age cohorts from various countries. These effects may sometimes produce unexpected results. For example, among Lebanese women aged between 15-39 years, over two-fifths (43 per cent) had left school by the age of thirteen years - that is, before attending high school. Among 50-59 year old Lebanese women, only one-third had left school by the age of 13 years.

It is clear that analysing figures on school experience must be done in the context of particular cohorts and some control must be made for the difference between those who arrived as children and those who arrived as adults.

### *NESB women's participation in higher education in Australia*

Figures from the Higher Education Series show the gradual increase in the proportion of people in higher education who are female. The proportion has increased consistently from 45.3 per cent in 1980 to 52.7 in 1990. However the proportion of students who are women varies considerably between birthplace groups. Among the NESB group, male students predominate slightly, while among the Australian born, females form the majority of the student block.

**Table 5: Share of women's student places in higher[3] education, 1990**

| Birthplace | Proportion women (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 54.5 |
| English speaking countries | 53.5 |
| Non-English speaking countries | 47.1 |
| All | 53.6 |

Source: Higher Education Series, Report no. 11

Age controlled participation rates show higher participation rates in higher education for NESB youth. This is primarily due to the higher participation amongst males. Further analysis would be needed to address the issues of what type of education is at stake here.

### *English language proficiency*

At the time of the 1986 Census nearly one-quarter of NESB women reported having poor English (that is, speaking English 'not well' or 'not at all'). Levels of English language proficiency vary considerably between birthplace and linguistic groups. A great deal of the variation has to do with the period of time that the members of the group have been in Australia. However, substantial numbers of women who have been in Australia for considerable periods of time still have poor English language competence. The following tables, compiled from 1986 Census data show the language proficiency of Italian and Arabic women according to period of arrival and age[4].

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[3] Higher education here refers to universities, and Institutes of Technology. It does not include the TAFE system.

[4] The tables were derived from a software package produced for the Office of Multicultural Affairs database by Census Applications. A series of tables covering 44 birthplace groups and 33 language categories can be produced. They show the number of people speaking English poorly by gender, age and period of residence.

**Table 6: Arabic-speaking women by age and period of residence speaking English 'Not Well' or 'Not at All'**

| Age | Period of residence (years)<br>0-4<br>(%) | 5-19<br>(%) | 20+<br>(%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-29 | 51 | 13 | 8 |
| 30-59 | 61 | 36 | 18 |
| 60 + | 90 | 80 | 43 |

**Table 7: Italian-speaking women by age and period of residence speaking English 'Not Well' or 'Not at All'**

| Age | Period of residence (years)<br>0-4<br>(%) | 5-19<br>(%) | 20+<br>(%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15-29 | 43 | 5 | 1 |
| 30-59 | 62 | 46 | 1 |
| 60 + | 94 | 90 | 62 |

It can be seen from the above that English proficiency varies enormously with age, regardless of time spent in Australia. Of Arabic-speaking women over 75 who have been in Australia between ten and thirty years, between 80 and 90 per cent speak English not well or not at all. But even among women of workforce age English proficiency is low. For example 46 per cent of women in the 40-45 age group who had been in Australia between ten and fourteen years speak English poorly.

The big jump in proficiency comes with those who arrived in Australia as children. Only 8 per cent of those aged 30-34 years who had been in Australia between twenty and twenty-nine years spoke English poorly. This suggests that *growing up* in Australia is a key factor in whether or not women speak English well.

While the proportion of Italian women speaking English poorly is higher overall than for Arabic women, the figures are smaller for each age-group - the higher overall figures reflecting different group age-structures. The figures for Italian women are higher, however, for every period of residence category, suggesting that more recent arrivals (that is, Arabic women) are learning English more effectively than the earlier-arrived groups.

Another issue to consider here, is the likely effect of second-language loss associated with ageing. It is unclear how great a contribution this may make to older Italian women's poor English. Other data compiled for the OMA data base indicates that the vast majority of Italian born women (92.8 per cent) speak a language other than English at home. Of these women, nearly 40 per cent speak English poorly.

Finally, dramatic differences, reflecting different pre-migration education levels between immigrant groups are apparent In 1986, more than half of Vietnamese and Chinese born women spoke English not well or not at all, compared with less than 3 per cent of those born in India (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:17).

## Employment
### *Labour force participation*

Currently, more than half (52.6 per cent) of all women in Australia are in the labour force, a historically high figure reflecting marked shifts in the composition of the workforce and the nature of women's work in the last forty years. As the table below shows, a somewhat lower proportion (45.2 per cent) of NESB women are in the labour force.

**Table 8: Labour force participation by birthplace: women in 1991**

| Birthplace | Participation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 53.8 |
| English speaking countries | 54.9 |
| Non-English speaking countries | 45.2 |
| All | 52.6 |

Source: ABS, The Labour Force, Australia, 1991

During the 1950s, 60s and 70s the overall participation rates of NESB women tended to be higher than for Australian born women. However, the participation rates of ESB and Australian born women continued to increase in the last half of the 1980s while those of NESB women fell or grew more slowly. This means that the overall participation rates of NESB women are now somewhat lower than those of other women. It was during the period 1978 - 88 that NESB women's participation in the labour force moved from being slightly greater than that of Australian born women to being significantly less (rates for these years are listed individually in Wooden, 1990:15).

### *Explaining trends in NESB women's labour force participation*

It is important to examine the reasons for this pattern. Past analyses have tended to emphasise labour supply factors - the characteristics and motivations of the women themselves. Clearly the ageing (in the post-war period) of significant groups within the NESB female population is important, as labour force participation rates typically fall near retirement age. In 1989, for example, the labour force participation rates of Polish and Hungarian women were 35.7 and 37.5 per cent respectively, compared to the average rate for NESB women of 45.2 per cent (ABS, Queensland, 1990:79).

However, it is argued in this report that factors relating to the *demand* for labour are also important in explaining NESB women's decreasing labour force participation.

The 1970s and 80s have been a time of consistently high rates of unemployment for NESB women (see below). In particular, the period has been marked by the decline of the manufacturing industry, resulting in a major decrease in the usual work available to (especially newly arrived) NESB women. There has been disproportionately low growth in total NESB female employment. For Australian born women, total employment in the period 1986-90 grew by 17 per cent, compared to a 4 per cent increase in the resident population. In the case of NESB women, total employment growth was almost the same as the growth in the resident population, suggesting that it has been far more difficult for those NESB women not previously in the workforce, to get jobs (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:41).

This argument, linking declining labour force particpation rates with declining employment opportunities for NESB women, is supported by the correlation between high unemployment rates and low participation rates for certain groups, such as young women and certain birthplace groups. As we shall see in Section 3, NESB women's participation rates appear to drop even further during times of recession. It should also be noted that similar trends are evident for NESB men as well, whose participation rates also fell during recent periods of high unemployment.

Data suggests that new arrivals have lower rates of labour force participation. Period of arrival also seems to affect participation rates. Noting the variation according to period of arrival, Wooden suggests that this is due to the 'different skills and background of the new arrivals over time'. We suggest that it also relates to the economic environment in Australia that women face on arrival. The rates are highest for those who arrived in the period 1966-1976, a period of relatively low unemployment.

### *'Hidden' labour force members*

The late 1970s and 1980s have also been marked by the spread of unregulated, clandestine and non-standard employment, at least some of which (such as outwork and cash-in-hand work) is not accurately measured by official surveys. Community-based literature suggests that NESB women are over-represented in these types of work (see Section 4) and thus, their true labour force participation rates may be higher than the official figures state. Further light will be shed on these debates as we examine other data about NESB women's work in Australia.

We have suggested above that one possible reason for the decline in NESB women's workforce participation rates, both absolutely and in relation to Anglo-Australian women, is their retreat from the labour force during times of high unemployment. This pattern has been described as a 'reserve army of labour' effect, whereby marginal groups such as NESB women enter the labour force during the period of economic boom, and withdraw from it during times when there is increased competition for jobs from locally born workers.

Stricker and Sheehan in ***Hidden Unemployment*** argue that 'hidden unemployment is likely to be two to three times as important for migrants as for the Australian born' (cited in Collins 1988:117). Moreover, they read the declining labour force participation rates of NESB migrants as evidence of the disproportionate burden of hidden unemployment among this group. Investigation of the size of the pool of 'marginally attached' female workforce can shed some light on this issue.

The ABS uses the term 'marginally attached' to refer to those workers, mostly female, who, whilst not actively seeking work during the week of the survey, want to work and would be able to start work within four weeks if certain conditions (such as childcare) were met.

In 1987, an ABS survey found NESB women to be slightly under-represented among those marginally attached to the labour force, and this pattern was repeated in a 1990 survey (see tables below). However, NESB women were significantly over-represented among those classed as 'discouraged job-seekers'. This would suggest that the lack of available jobs at that time affected NESB women's employment patterns more significantly than those of other women. A similar pattern can be observed for NESB men.

**Table 9: Discouraged job-seekers by birthplace: women with a marginal attachment to the labour force, 1987 and 1990**

| Birthplace | Discouraged job-seekers | |
|---|---|---|
| | **1987** | **1990** |
| Australia | 11.5 | 12.3 |
| ES countries | 17.1 | 16.8 |
| NES countries | 18.6 | 23.3 |
| All | 13.0 | 13.7 |

Source:ABS Queensland, 1989:129

**Table 10: Marginally attached and discouraged job-seekers by birthplace: women (15-69 years) not in the labour force, 1987**

| Birthplace | Marginally attached | Discouraged job-seekers |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 23.5 | 2.7 |
| ES countries | 25.6 | 4.0 |
| NES countries | 19.9 | 4.4 |
| All | 23.0 | 3.2 |

Source:ABS, 1990

In 1987, NESB women were also slightly over-represented among those with a marginal attachment to the labour force who intended to look for work in the next twelve months (ABS, 1989:130). They comprised 15 per cent of the women in this category, as opposed to approximately 12.5 per cent of the labour force at that time.

It is also of interest that surveys of people not in the labour force show that a greater proportion of NESB women than ESB women gave the reason as illness/injury, although the proportions in each case were small: 3.3 per cent compared with 2.6 per cent for Australian born women (ABS Queensland, 1990:96)[5].

### *NESB young women*

Some literature has suggested that there is likely to be higher 'hidden unemployment' among NESB young women (see Alcorso, 1984). An ABS survey of transition from education to work in 1989, when taken together with labour force participation data, gives further indirect evidence of hidden unemployment among NESB young women. It looked at the proportion of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years who had attended and left school in Australia in 1988 who had obtained employment in 1989.

**Table 11: Overseas born youth finding employment after leaving school**

| Birthplace | Female (%) | Male (%) |
|---|---|---|
| ES countries | 76.4 | 80.4 |
| NES countries | 55.1 | 91.3 |
| All | 66.1 | 85.9 |

Source: derived from ABS, Queensland, 1990:69

NESB young women, therefore, appear to be much less likely than other youth to find employment following the completion of their schooling.

NESB young women are also characterised by very low labour force participation rates compared to other groups. Figures for overseas born 15-19 year-olds compared to Australian born in 1987 were 45 versus 56 per cent (ABS, 1989:99), while the 1986 Census showed that overseas born young women from some birthplaces have even lower rates of workforce participation, as the following table shows.

**Table 12: Proportion of 15-19 year-olds not in the labour force by birthplace and sex, 1986**

| Birthplace | Female (%) | Male (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Lebanon | 54.9 | 34.6 |
| Turkey | 50.9 | 36.5 |
| Vietnam | 52.1 | 46.2 |
| All | 39.6 | 31.7 |

Source: Jones, 1990

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[5] The proportion of NESB men not in the labour force due to work injury is much greater than any other group: 37.7 per cent compared with 18.7 per cent for Australian born men. This large proportion of NESB men not in the workforce due to injury or ill-health may have consequences for NESB women's ability to participate in the labour force, given that NESB men are less likely to be cared for in institutions than Australian born men and that women form the main body of carers.

### *Labour force participation of NESB women during their life cycle*

Married NESB women have slightly lower participation rates than married ESB women.

**Table 13: Labour force participation: married women in 1989**

| Birthplace | Participation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 51.8 |
| English speaking countries | 50.7 |
| Non-English speaking countries | 48.3 |
| All | 51.3 |

Source: ABS, Queensland, 1990:79

While it was *married* Australian born women who had the fastest rates of increased participation in the labour force during the 1980s, married NESB women's participation increased only slightly. One of the reasons for this difference may be the types of jobs available to ESB and NESB women. ESB married women's increased participation during the period was in part-time work. This is and area where NESB women are much less represented (see below).

However, *married* NESB women are more likely to work than *unmarried* NESB women - while among Australian born women, the opposite is true.

Detailed analysis shows that there is considerable diversity between birthplace groups, reflecting different age structures as well as socio-economic and cultural differences. Even after age correction, considerable variation according to birthplace can be found. Some groups, such as Lebanese women, have consistently much lower rates, while other groups (for example, Yugoslavian[6] and Vietnamese women) have relatively high rates of involvement in the labour force.

Among ESB women, the variation across birthplace groups is much less, ranging from 51.6 per cent for women from Papua New Guinea to 63 per cent for Canadian women for the 30-34 year old group. At least in respect of labour force participation, the category 'ESB' appears to have more viability than that of 'NESB'.

Analyses of labour force statistics indicate that NESB female participation rates are lower for most age categories, most particularly for the 15-24 age group, and for the older age groups. So, contrary to certain claims (see ABS, 1989:27), the trend to declining workforce participation vis a vis Australian born women cannot simply be seen as a result of the ageing of the population.

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[6] The terms 'Yugoslav' and 'Yugoslavia' will continue to be used to refer to women from all the areas that made up the pre-1991 Yugoslavia.

The following figures give an indication of this for married women of a prime child-bearing age group.

**Table 14: Labour force participation: married women, 30-39 years, 1986**

| Birthplace | Participation rate (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 59.0 |
| English speaking countries | 63.1 |
| Non-English speaking countries | 59.2 |
| Lebanon | 33.4 |
| Turkey | 47.0 |
| Philippines | 58.7 |
| Chile | 59.4 |
| Malaysia and Brunei | 64.0 |
| Yugoslavia | 66.3 |
| Poland | 70.7 |
| Vietnam | 73.7 |
| All | 59.7 |

Source: Census Applications, 1988

Even more detailed analysis shows that while *30-34 year-old* married NESB women had *higher* participation rates than Australian born women, this ratio changed for the 35-39 year old group, among whom Australian born women had the highest rates. These rates remained lower than the average for all women. The question then is how much does labour force participation pick up after the child-rearing years? It seems that it picks up more quickly for ESB and Australian born women than NESB women, as the following table suggests.

**Table 15: Changes in the labour force participation rates: married women, 30-34 and 35-39 years, by birthplace, 1986**

| Birthplace | Participation rate | | Differences | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 30-34 | 35-39 | b'n rates | from | average |
| Australia | 55.3 | 62.8 | 7.5 | -0.8 | -0.3 |
| Overseas | 58.1 | 63.7 | 5.4 | 2.0 | 0.6 |
| ESB | 58.6 | 66.4 | 7.8 | 2.5 | 3.3 |
| NESB | 57.8 | 61.9 | 4.1 | 1.7 | -1.2 |
| All | 56.1 | 63.1 | 7.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

Source: 1986 Census of Population and Housing

Appendix J provides even more detailed analysis of the above trends, by comparing the experience of three sets of individual birthplace groups. Further investigation is needed to interpret fully patterns such as these in relation to NESB women's differential access to part-time work and to child-care. Further research is also required to understand the reasons for the variation across groups within the NESB cluster. It seems that the issues facing women attempting to integrate paid work with having children do not impact evenly across birthplace groups.

This tendency for high participation in paid work to coincide with child-rearing (and its attendant heavy burden of unpaid work) is exacerbated by NESB women's much longer average working hours.

***Working hours***

Although NESB women are generally less likely to be in the paid workforce, they work much longer hours once there. This is especially true of married NESB women.

**Table 16: Full-time employment by birthplace: employed women in 1989**

| Birthplace | Women (%) | Married women (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 59.0 | 50.8 |
| ES countries | 57.1 | 49.5 |
| NES countries | 67.5 | 65.9 |
| All | 59.9 | 53.1 |

Source: ABS, Queensland, 1990:84

The pattern of much higher rates of full-time work is replicated for all age-groups except the 15-19 year group (ABS, Brisbane, 1992). Moreoever, detailed surveys have shown that the same pattern is found in particular industry sectors - including the public sector, where a survey carried out for EEO purposes in 1990 found that both temporary and permanent NESB women employees had less access to part-time work than ESB women (ODEOPE, 1992). (It should be noted that for males, there is no significant difference between birthplace groups - all have rates of full-time work of over 90 per cent).

Some groups in the workforce have very large proportions working full-time. For example, for East Asian and Vietnamese women the rates were 80 per cent and 83 per cent respectively, with an even higher rate of full-time employment for married Vietnamese women - 89 per cent).

These high rates of full-time employment reflect the characteristic work practices of the industry sectors where NESB women are concentrated, such as manufacturing, and their under-representation in the retail sector. There is evidence that if part-time work was more available to NESB women, they would take it. Qualitative research has found many NESB women with small children complaining of not being able to find part-time work (see, Cox and Martin, 1975 and Alcorso, 1991) and labour force surveys consistently find that a primary cause of NESB women's unavailability for work is lack of suitable childcare or generally the need to care for children (ABS QLD, 1990:129).

However, it is also clear that the concentration of NESB women in full-time work reflects a greater desire for such work on their part, compared to Australian born women. Presumably, this is largely for financial reasons. Thus, a 1987 survey of those not in the work force but intending to look for work in the next twelve months, found a greater proportion of NESB women (30 per cent) compared to Australian born women (21 per cent) who wanted full-time work (ABS Qld, 1990:130). Other figures suggest that of those women not in the labour force but with a marginal attachment to it, 23 per cent of NESB women wanted full-time work compared with 17 per cent of ESB women. However, twice as many NESB women had 'no preference' - that is, were prepared to accept either part-time or full-time work (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:26).

In addition, a significantly higher proportion of NESB women worked overtime - in 1990, 47.5 per cent worked 35-40 hours per week, compared with 37 per cent of ESB and Australian born women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:42).

### *NESB women and the double bind*

One of the arguments found in the literature on migrant women in Australia has been that NESB women are in a 'double bind'. Historically, they have migrated to Australia as dependents, and were considered to be family-makers rather than 'workers' by the State (see Martin 1984 and 1986). Yet, once in Australia, the high cost of living necessitated their participation in paid work, at a period in their lives when they were also responsible for 'social reproduction' - that is, domestic work, consumption and the bearing and rearing of children. Little support in terms of working conditions or services was given for these dual and often contradictory roles. The argument continues that it was these women who had to cope with the most inconvenient and inflexible living and working conditions - that is, long hours of work, long travel times, shift work and least access to childcare. According to Jeannie Martin, 'Unlike the majority of their Australian counterparts, immigrant women are caught squarely in the contradiction between consumption/social reproduction and production, and are socially punished for being there' (1984:115).

Martin's argument about the post-war period was based on the evidence of the much higher rates of workforce participation manifest among NESB women in those years. In 1973, for example, the comparable rates were:

**Table 17: Labour force participation: women in 1973**

| Birthplace | Women (%) | Married women (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 40.7 | 36.6 |
| ES countries | 42.9 | 43.8 |
| NES countries | 49.0 | 48.2 |
| All | 42.0 | 39.1 |

Source: ABS, Queensland, 1990:98

The shifts in rates of labour force participation noted above suggests that today, more Australian born women than NESB women are engaged in the paid labour force and, consequently are grappling with the multiple pressures of trying to undertake paid and unpaid work. The social squeeze analysed by Martin as most particularly a NESB women's problem in the earlier period seems to have become generalised. If anything, NESB women, who appear to be retreating from the workforce in the face of the adverse economic climate, have less of the stresses of the double shift. However this conclusion is contradicted by the fact that NESB women tend to work longer hours than ESB women and that some groups of married NESB women have a particularly heavy burden of paid work.

Furthermore, census data relating to children and employment indicate that a far smaller proportion (23 per cent) of NESB employed women are childless compared to other employed women (38 per cent). The differences in the proportion childless are far greater among *employed* women than for the population as a whole. The following table shows these figures, as well as the total numbers of women in each birthplace group who are childless.

**Table 18: Proportion of women childless, by birthplace and whether employed**

| Birthplace | Employed women (%) | Total women (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 41 | 30 |
| ES countries* | 35 | 24 |
| NES countries | 23 | 18 |
| All | 38 | 27 |

* Tabulations available from the ABS did not allow the standard grouping of countries to make up ESB and NESB. Consequently, the ESB category here includes the following ES countries in addition to the usual ones: Mauritius, Egypt, non-Anglophone Africa, Pacific Islands and South and Central America.

Source: 1986 Census of Population and Housing

The 1987 ABS Time-Use survey, which collected data on time spent on paid and unpaid daily activities, found that NESB women spent slightly less time in labour force-related activities than other women, and a greater proportion of time in unpaid tasks, especially shopping, cooking and caring for their own and other people's children (Bittman, 1991:56). They had the least leisure time of any group, and spent the least time in socialising and entertainment. However, the study revealed more substantial differentials between groups (Southern European and UK/Irish women spent 30 per cent more time on housework than other women). Further analysis, of men's as well as women's domestic work, would be required to complete the picture sketched out in the survey findings.

## Unemployment

As a group, NESB women have generally suffered more unemployment than any other equivalent group in Australian society except Aborigines and people with disabilities. The official unemployment rate for NESB women rose from a low point of 2.7 in 1973 to a peak of 12.5 during the 1982-3 recession, to 8.0 per cent in May, 1989 (ABS, 1989:120 and ABS, The Labour Force, Australia, 1989). (The details of increasing unemployment during the current recession is dealt with in the next section). The gap between the unemployment rates of Australian born and NESB women has tended to be larger for married women. This reflects the greater labour force participation of married over unmarried NESB women (see p. 29).

Moreover, unemployment rates vary considerably for different age groups. NESB women over the ages of 25 years, for example, tend to have much higher unemployment rates than those of other women. For the 45-54 group, for example, unemployment among NESB women is

11.3 per cent compared with 3.9 per cent for Australian born women, reflecting the latter's much more secure hold on the labour market (Wooden, 1990:18).

Wooden's analysis of unemployment by migration category shows refugees to be much worse off than others. Family reunion migrants are next, also experiencing higher rates than other sponsored migrants. Wooden refers to data on unemployment which is cross-tabulated by the presence of family in Australia. It shows women, as dependents, to have higher unemployment rates.

### *Unemployment in the longer term*

It is often implied that high unemployment rates for migrants are likely to be primarily the result of adjustment difficulties on arrival. Wooden, for example, argues that ' ... any employment disadvantage migrants face tends to work itself out (at least partly) with time' (1990:24). Their relatively recent arrival time is used to explain the high unemployment among Asian born Australians. Stromback and Williams suggest that most of the fall in unemployment takes place in the first four years (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:30).

These views have been qualified by Jock Collins and others. In 1985 Harrison suggested that a 'rump of hard core or long-term unemployed' was being formed in the migrant population (quoted in Collins, 1988:115); he argues that the high rates for those with 3-4 years of residence casts doubt as to whether these later arrivals will ever be accomodated 'as successfully as those who arrived in earlier periods'. More recently, Morrissey et al have examined the fate of a 'distinct labour market segment with definable and distinctive ethnic (and other socio-economic) characteristics ... that is affected in particular ways by structural change' - that is, Southern European unskilled or semi-skilled manufacturing workers (Morrissey et al 1992). Although arriving in Australia predominantly in the 1950s and 1960s, the Illawarra group traced by Morrissey et al at BHP Steel has been hit by severe unemployment only during the 1980s as a result of the restructuring of production at BHP.

There is no doubt that unemployment rates are particularly high for recently arrived women, who face difficulty transferring their skills to new labour markets as well as being limited by low English language proficiency. Castles et al have shown that for the years 1984-5 overseas born women who had less than 20 months residency in Australia had relative unemployment rates of up to 200 per cent more than women generally (Castles et al 1986:32).

At the same time, however, it is clear that there is not a linear relationship between length of residency and unemployment rates, and that groups which arrived in periods of rapid job loss in manufacturing appear to have had particular difficulty in becoming integrated into the labour market. Thus, in 1990, NESB women arriving in 1981-85 had lower rates than those arriving in the earlier period 1976-1980 (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:37).

### *Receipt of unemployment benefits*

According to unpublished Department of Social Security data, a smaller proportion of NESB than of Australian born women received the unemployment benefit, despite the higher rates of unemployment among the former. While more than one-half (54 per cent) of unemployed Australian born women received the unemployment benefit, only just over one-third (36 per cent) of unemployed NESB women did (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:37). The likely reasons are two-fold. First, married women, (typically ineligible for unemployment benefits) make up a greater proportion of the NESB than the Australian born female labour force. Secondly, NESB women are likely to have less knowledge of their welfare rights than ESB women.

### Employment status

The small business sector has been a vital and growing sector of the Australian economy in the last two decades. Around 45 per cent of those employed in the private sector (outside agriculture) work in enterprises of less than 20 people. The vast majority of employers in Australia employ less than 10 people, so that the category 'employer' is conventionally used as a proxy for small business. NESB women have shared in this expanding sector, to a greater extent than Australian born women. In November, 1990, the proportions for each group were:

**Table 19: Employment status by birthplace: employed females, 1990**

| Birthplace | Employer (%) | Self-employed (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 3.6 | 7.4 |
| ES countries | 2.9 | 6.2 |
| NES countries | 4.3 | 8.0 |
| All | 3.6 | 7.3 |

Source: ABS, Brisbane, 1992:45

While these aggregate figures do not show marked differences, there is great variation between birthplace groups and age groups, with all the major NES birthplace groups except Yugoslav, Turkish and Vietnamese background women[7] having significantly larger proportions engaged in small business and self-employment.

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[7] The relatively recency of arrival of the Vietnamese to Australia at the time of the 1986 Census may account for their low rate; 1991 Census figures may show a different picture.

**Table 20: Employment status by selected birthplace: employed females in NSW, 1986**

| Birthplace | Employer (%) | Self-employed (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 4.5 | 7.1 |
| China | 11.2 | 10.7 |
| Cyprus | 9.5 | 13.7 |
| Greece | 10.1 | 15.7 |
| Italy | 7.2 | 13.0 |
| Korea | 6.1 | 19.6 |
| Lebanon | 8.3 | 15.6 |
| Turkey | 3.5 | 8.4 |
| UK and Eire | 3.7 | 6.0 |
| Vietnam | 3.3 | 5.6 |
| Yugoslavia | 2.4 | 4.6 |
| All | 3.6 | 7.2 |

Source: 1986 Census of Population and Housing

The greatest proportion of NESB entrepreneurs occurs primarily within the 15-34 age group - a time of entry into the family business. Marriage also considerably increases NESB women's likelihood of being an employer or self-employed; from 1.1 per cent and 3.3 per cent for unmarried NESB women to 5.2 per cent and 9.4 per cent for married NESB women (1990 figures). This phenomenon reflects the importance of the 'family business' in ethnic communities (see Alcorso, forthcoming).

It should be recognised that in many cases, the businesses involved are small, precarious and marginal and depend on high levels of self-exploitation. Therefore the disproportionate attainment of 'entrepreneurial' status can not be straightforwardly interpreted as evidence of success or social mobility for NESB women (see also Castles et al, 1991).

### *Home-based work*

In 1989 the ABS conducted a survey of home-based employment which found that approximately 6.0 per cent of employed Australian women worked at home. NESB women appeared to be slightly less likely to be employed at home than ESB women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:54). The survey further showed that of NESB women working at home, one-quarter, or around 2,800, were in the manufacturing industry. These figures, however, appear severely to underestimate the number of NESB women doing home-based work compared to other research on the topic (see also Section 4).

Industry estimates for the number of outworkers in the clothing industry alone in the mid-1980s ranged between 15,000 and 60,000 (of which the vast majority would be NESB women) (see Committee to Inquire into the Status of Women in Employment in Commerce and Industry, 1987). A document from the Clothing and Allied Trade Union estimated that, in 1987, there were between 30,000 and 60,000 outworkers in NSW and Victoria alone (Yeatman, 1992:65). Recent observers of the industry conclude that the number has been increasing since then (Yeatman, 1992:6).

The discrepancy between the ABS and the industry estimates seems too great to be a matter of chance, and points to problems in relying on official statistical data in areas of non-standard employment. Moreover, the ABS figure of 2,800 includes manufacturing employees in all occupations. Since the majority of NESB women found by ABS to be working at home were clerks (43.2 per cent), the gap between the official estimates and those of employers and unions is even greater.

Another 1986 Census source that is available to give a partial insight is a table that gives a breakdown of industry codes, by gender, by labour force status. It found 262,000 women working in manufacturing, a quarter of whom were in textiles, clothing and footwear (TCF) industries. Five per cent (3,365 women) were self-employed, compared to 1,608 men. For textiles the proportion of workers who were self-employed was higher for women than for men, while for clothing and footwear the figure was higher for men than for women. A slightly greater proportion of the self-employed rather than employed TCF workers were women, pointing to the predominance of women among home-based workers.

Similarly, Castles et al's analysis found a rapid increase in the proportion of self-employed female manufacturing workers between the years 1982-87, from 4.9 -12.8 per cent of all female workers in manufacturing. By comparison, the male figures rose from 19.7 to 24.5 per cent during this period. However, it remains unclear to what extent the figures on self-employment capture the outworking labour force[8].

### *Industrial location*

It is well-known that NESB women are concentrated disproportionately in the manufacturing industry. This is particularly true of Southern European women, and more recently of those from the Middle East and South East Asia. The manufacturing industry has declined in size since the immediate post-war decades, and also declined in importance as an employer of NESB women generally. Even so, NESB women have remained over-represented in it as Table 21 shows.

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[8] Doubt is cast on their ability to do so by the fact that (i) far higher proportions of men than women are classed as self-employed and (ii) the proportions (as shown above) are lower in the TCF industries than for manufacturing as a whole.

**Table 21: Women in manufacturing: selected birthplace groups, 1971-86**

| Birthplace labour | Manufacturing employment | | Proportion total female force (%) | (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1971** | **1986** | **1971** | **1986** |
| Australia | 181,468 | 157,413 | 14.8 | 8.1 |
| *English speaking countries* | *37,987* | *30,414* | | *10.3* |
| UK/Ireland | 35,844 | 24,893 | 21.5 | 16.7 |
| New Zealand | 1,849 | 5,011 | 13.0 | 10.6 |
| *Non-English speaking countries* | *92,889* | *72,283* | | *23.4* |
| Greece | 18,167 | 8,979 | 54.6 | 32.2 |
| Italy | 20,422 | 10,650 | 45.9 | 35.7 |
| Malta | 3,854 | 2,169 | 46.3 | 24.6 |
| Poland | 4,432 | 2,353 | 37.9 | 25.5 |
| Yugoslavia | 11,064 | 10,471 | 55.1 | 36.6 |
| Cyprus | 1,426 | 1,313 | 45.6 | 30.9 |
| Lebanon | 2,210 | 993 | 52.7 | 18.4 |
| Egypt | 1,151 | 1,002 | 40.2 | 17.4 |
| Turkey | * | 1,281 | 67.4 | 44.7 |
| Vietnam | | 5,340 | * | 50.5 |
| All | 312,344 | 262,003 | 18.9 | 10.2 |

Source: derived from Webber et al, 1989 and Alcorso, 1991

Manufacturing has continued to provide more than twice the proportion of jobs to NESB women as for Australian born women in the 1971-86 period, despite the contracting size of the sector as a whole.

It has been especially important to certain birthplace groups as shown above, providing up to half the total female employment for some (such as Greek, Yugoslav and Turkish women). Data from 1990 suggests that the gap between the proportions of Australian born and NESB women in manufacturing has remained steady in the last few years, with concentration of the former in manufacturing being 7.5 per cent compared to 23 per cent of NESB women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:65).

On the other hand, NESB women are less likely to be employed in community services, property and business services.

**Table 22: Industry by selected birthplace groups: employed women, 1990**

| Birthplace | Wholesale /Retail (%) | Finance /Property (%) | Community /Services (%) | Recreation /Personal (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 23.6 | 13.9 | 29.0 | 10.2 |
| ES countries | 20.9 | 13.5 | 32.8 | 8.1 |
| NES countries | 19.3 | 10.4 | 24.2 | 9.2 |
| Greece | 9.5 | 3.4 | 0.1 | 1.8 |
| Vietnam | 4.0 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 0.9 |

Source: derived from ABS, Brisbane, 1992:65

Within manufacturing, Webber et al have shown that NESB women have consistently made up approximately 30 per cent of the female workforce, but that the proportion has varied significantly across manufacturing industries, and regionally (see Section 4).

It is the clothing, textiles and footwear industry that is most distinctive in its reliance on female labour from non-English speaking countries. By contrast, the food, beverages and tobacco, wood, wood products and furniture; and the paper and paper products industries, are characterised by a more limited reliance on overseas born labour (Webber et al, 1989:17).

This has meant that NESB women and men have been differentially affected by industrial restructuring, losing jobs faster when the industries in which they have been most concentrated have been in most rapid decline. In addition, Webber et al have noted some feminisation of certain manufacturing industries. While in the early 1970s, NESB women lost manufacturing jobs at a faster rate than men and Australian born women, in the 1980s this trend was reversed, with men losing jobs much faster than women. The 'Australianisation' of the workforce continued during this period, with NESB workers losing jobs faster than would be expected from their industrial location or the changing age structure of key NESB populations. Some comparative figures for job change during the current 1990-1 recession are given in Section 3.

Another important feature of the industrial concentration of NESB women has been its exaggeration in the case of newly arrived immigrant women - those with less than five years residence in Australia (see Alcorso, 1991). The reduction in the total manufacturing workforce has meant that for some groups, the *proportion* of newly arrived women going into manufacturing has been dropping in the last twenty years. For example, at the time of the 1971 and 1976 Censuses, three-quarters of recently arrived Turkish women and two-thirds of recently arrived Yugoslav women worked in manufacturing, compared with 63.5 per cent and 48.4 per cent respectively in 1986. But for many groups (such as Turkish and Vietnamese women) employment in the manufacturing industry has remained very high, at more than six times the rate for Australian women as a whole (Alcorso, 1991:42).

**Table 23: Women in manufacturing by birthplace and period of arrival, 1986**

| Birthplace | Proportion in manufacturing (%)<br>*<5 years in Aus* | *5+ years in Aus* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | | | 8.1 |
| United Kingdom | 10.1 | 11.1 | 11.0 |
| Italy | 27.3 | 25.7 | 25.7 |
| Latin America | 27.3 | 20.9 | 21.6 |
| Lebanon | 24.4 | 18.2 | 18.4 |
| Turkey | 63.5 | 42.8 | 44.7 |
| Vietnam | 63.4 | 45.7 | 50.5 |
| All | | | 10.2 |

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1986

### *Occupational segmentation*

Occupationally, NESB women have also traditionally been segregated within the workforce, overwhelmingly concentrated in blue-collar manual occupations. However, the situation seems to have been changing significantly during the late 1980s, as the following figures suggest.

**Table 24: Women's occupation by birthplace, 1986 and 1990**

| Birthplace | Managers and Professionals* (%) | (%) | Semi-skilled white-collar (%) | (%) | Tradespersons and blue-collar (%) | (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1986** | **1990** | **1986** | **1990** | **1986** | **1990** |
| Australia | 28.4 | 26.1 | 56.6 | 57.0 | 15.0 | 17.0 |
| ESCs | 29.6 | 26.9 | 50.0 | 54.8 | 20.3 | 18.3 |
| NESCs | 18.7 | 21.4 | 35.6 | 41.6 | 45.7 | 37.0 |
| All | 27.3 | 25.5 | 53.2 | 54.8 | 19.6 | 19.6 |

* The eight Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) categories have been regrouped in the following manner: managers and administrators, professionals and para-professionals; clerks, salespersons and personal service workers; tradespersons, labourers and related workers. It should be noted, however, that the above figures are preliminary since errors may be incurred by comparing labour force survey data with census data.

Source: derived from ABS, 1989:150 and ABS, Brisbane, 1992:58

Women with poor English language proficiency fared much worse in occupational terms. According to the 1986 Census, 80.5 per cent of them were employed in the categories tradespersons, plant and machine operators and drivers, and labourers and related workers, compared to the 45.7 per cent of NESB women as a whole in this category.

As we have seen elsewhere, use of broad categories can create difficulties, masking differences which could well show up with greater disaggregation of the data. For example, Asian women who are proficient in English (for example Southern Asians) have the highest proportion employed as professionals from any group (16.3 per cent in 1986 compared to 0.1 per cent of Vietnamese women in 1990).

### *Occupational mobility*

A 1990 ABS survey of occupational mobility indicated that Australian born and ESB women were more likely than NESB women to change minor occupational grouping over a one-year period. For example, among those who arrived in Australia between the years 1981-1990, 7.5 per cent of NESB women changed minor occupation compared to 11.6 per cent of ESB women and 9.0 per cent of Australian born women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:62). However, the ABS survey did not provide information on the direction of the move, as the questions pertaining to the direction were not asked.

### Income and employment benefits

### *Earnings*

Median female weekly earnings (f.w.e) reflect the long hours worked by NESB women, as those of NESB women are somewhat higher than Australian median f.w.e:

- $347.42 compared to $327.25 in August, 1990 (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:70).

However, for hours worked, NESB women earned less than other groups; in 1990, the median weekly earnings for full-time work was $397.22 compared to $412.88 for all women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:71). This gap exists despite the age effect, which should tend to raise the average NESB female wage; there are fewer young (and therefore low-income earning) women in the NESB group.

There is also variation by state. NESB women earn less than Australian median f.w.e. in the ACT and QLD, and those from Southern Europe earn less than other groups.

This means that NESB women are concentrated in the lowest-paying jobs, but they earn more than others in those jobs, as a result of the longer hours they work. In manufacturing where part-time work is less available, Australian born women earn more than NESB women.

### *Occupational benefits*

As a consequence of their greater representation in full-time work, NESB women are more likely to receive the employee benefits of recreation and sick leave, award superannuation and long service leave. In 1990, 43.8 per cent received award superannuation compared with 43 per cent of Australian born women (ABS, Brisbane, 1989:75), though both figures are still much lower than the male figure of 57 per cent (in 1990, ACTU, 1991:3).

They were less likely to receive most other benefits, including 'children's education/childcare' - 0.3 per cent of all Australian women compared with 0.1 per cent of NESB women. While employer-provided benefits such as childcare are currently scarce, and typically found in white-collar employment areas, their importance to wage-earning women is likely to grow during the 1990s, particularly in the form of 'salary-sacrifice' packages whereby childcare is paid for from pre-tax earnings.

## Employment-related training

In 1989 the ABS conducted a major supplementary survey on job-related training, entitled 'How workers get their training'. It examined three types of job-related training: on-the-job, in-house and external, with the former being the most common and the latter the least common.

Generally, it showed few major differences between female and male employees, though the rate of participation in training by males tended to be slightly higher for each of the two more formal categories and the rate higher for women for the category 'on-the-job training' (Baker and Wooden, 1991:7).

However, the differences between NESB and ESB employees were marked in the survey as were the differentials between male and female employees from particular NES birthplace groups.

**Table 25: Participation in training in the last 12 months by birthplace and sex, 1989**

| Birthplace | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|---|---|---|
| | *External training courses* | |
| Australia | 10.1 | 9.6 |
| ES countries | 15.3 | 9.8 |
| NES countries | 7.7 | 5.4 |
| Yugoslavia | 2.3 | 0.9 |
| Italy | 7.1 | 2.6 |
| Middle East | 11.8 | 5.0 |
| Vietnam | 1.2 | 11.5 |
| All | 10.4 | 9.1 |

| Birthplace | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|---|---|---|
| | *In-house training courses* | |
| Australia | 36.5 | 35.8 |
| ES countries | 37.7 | 36.9 |
| NES countries | 25.3 | 24.7 |
| Yugoslavia | 21.1 | 17.4 |
| Italy | 15.4 | 21.1 |
| Middle East | 26.8 | 14.2 |
| Vietnam | 8.2 | 17.4 |
| All | 35.1 | 34.6 |

| Birthplace | Male (%) | Female (%) |
|---|---|---|
| | *On-the-job training courses* | |
| Australia | 72.4 | 74.2 |
| ES countries | 71.9 | 71.7 |
| NES countries | 63.0 | 63.2 |
| Yugoslavia | 43.2 | 40.0 |
| Italy | 43.5 | 52.6 |
| Middle East | 64.4 | 66.9 |
| Vietnam | 75.5 | 61.6 |
| All | 71.0 | 72.7 |

Source: Baker and Wooden, 1991

The survey showed that NESB women are less likely to receive employment-related training, especially in-house and external training. This is despite their much greater representation in full-time work, and the greater need those who have received their training overseas have for such training in order to make their skills more relevant to the Australian environment (Baker and Wooden, 1991).

While the NESB workforce is skewed towards the older age groups, among whom the amount of training tends to be lower than for other groups, Baker and Wooden's analysis found that age was not statistically associated with any differential training outcomes for NESB workers independently of other variables (1991:32). Indeed, even when other principal factors that might be skewing the results were standardised for (such as experience, education and occupation) the differences remained. Baker and Wooden conclude that education does not give NESB workers the same boost to the probability of receiving training as it does for the Australian born.

While occupational segregation does not fully explain the lower levels of training received by NESB women, it is nevertheless true that the occupations in which NESB women are found are associated with lower training activity.

Baker and Wooden state that 'disaggregated birthplace data reveal no major differences with respect to country difference within the NESB and ESB immigrant groups' (1991:33). However, data presented in their own report appear to reveal the opposite. Because they relate to the difference between percentages of what were initially quite small samples, these may not be reliable in a statistical sense. Thus it may not be true that the participation in external courses by Vietnamese born women was over ten times that of the rate for Vietnamese born men, as the figures above suggest. On the other hand, it is not necessary to take a purist, statistical approach, rejecting such differences out of hand and not examine the possibility that there is a real difference here. Such data can be used as a starting point, to explore whether, for example, the occupational distribution or other characteristics of Vietnamese women makes them more likely than other women to participate in external courses.

It is worth noting that in the context of the survey, on-the-job training was made up of, inter alia, 'watching others, being shown and teaching self'. Baker and Wooden show that 'teaching self' is the most common form for each of the three major birthplace breakdowns. It is also noticeable from the figures presented that as a group NESB have the lowest rates of 'watching others' and 'asking questions'.

## Conclusion

This section has summarised the main statistical parameters of NESB women's experiences in the Australian labour market. Although for comparative purposes NESB and ESB women were frequently treated as groups, the analysis emphasised the diversity within the NESB group. In some areas, a very detailed analysis of ABS data was provided to highlight subtle trends or suggestive patterns.

One of the issues examined critically through analysis of statistical data was NESB women's participation in the paid labour force and the way in which this intersected with their unpaid domestic responsibilities. It appears that, while the particpation of NESB women in the paid workforce as a whole is now less than that of Australian born and ESB women, NESB married women of child-bearing age are particularly likely to be carrying a heavy double burden of paid and unpaid work. Evidence suggesting that NESB women are likely to be over-represented in the 'hidden workforce' (and amongst the 'hidden unemployed') was also reviewed.

While the older average age of NESB women compared to Australian born women is partly responsible for their different patterns of labour force participation, it was argued that other, less frequently mentioned factors were salient. The nature of the labour market in Australia in different periods has led to NESB women's retreat from the labour force at times, and to the lack of incorporation of newly arrived NESB women into the labour force in recent years. Similarly, it was suggested that the lack of part-time jobs available to NESB women has been partly responsible for the slower 'pick-up' of NESB women back into the labour force after child-rearing.

This section has highlighted the industrial concentration of NESB women in manufacturing as the major characteristic of their labour force experience in Australia. However, as in other areas, the *degree* of concentration in manufacturing varies across birthplace groups and according to period of arrival. Newly arrived NESB women, and Turkish, Vietnamese and Yugoslav women continue to be particularly over-represented in this industry.

The section also described the extensive participation of NESB women in the growing sector of small business and self-employment, although this sector, like manufacturing, remains extremely vulnerable in times of economic contraction. Changes in patterns of occupational segmentation since 1986 were noted, reflecting the recent entry of highly qualified NESB women into the country and, encouragingly, into the workforce.

The next section examines, through the use of statistical data, NESB women's experiences in the labour force during the current (1990-92) recession.

## SECTION 3: NESB WOMEN IN THE 1990-2 RECESSION

The major cyclical economic event affecting NESB women's experiences in the labour market since 1985 has been the current 1990-2 recession. The recession is interesting from the point of view of women's employment as, unlike earlier periods, women's unemployment rates overall have remained lower than men's, despite historically high rates of female participation in the paid workforce (Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), 1991:6). This section of the report looks at labour market responses to the recession and focuses on patterns specific to NESB women.

### Unemployment

#### *Unemployment rates*

For the first time in the 1990-2 recession, women have experienced lower formal rates of unemployment than men: 8.6 per cent compared with 10.2 per cent in August, 1991 (ABS, The Labour Force, Australia, August, 1991). This rate is also lower than during the 1982-3 recession, when the average female unemployment rate was 9.7 per cent (DEET, 1991:6).

However, this pattern of lower rates is not reproduced in the case of NESB women, whose unemployment rates in the current recession are, as in earlier periods, much higher than those of Australian born and English speaking background women.

In August, 1991, the comparative rates were:

**Table 26: Unemployment rates by birthplace**

| Birthplace | Female (%) | Male (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 8.1 | 9.2 |
| ES countries | 7.8 | 12.3 |
| NES countries | 12.5 | 12.8 |
| All | 8.6 | 10.2 |

Source: ABS, The Labour Force Australia, 1991

Thus, the rates of NESB women and men are fairly similar (indeed, at other points in the current recession NESB men have experienced lower rates than NESB women). It seems that the observed phenomenon of 'women holding on to jobs with more tenacity' (DEET, 1991:6) is more properly described as an Anglo-Australian phenomenon.

### *Duration of unemployment*

Duration of unemployment is seen as a key indicator of a person's likelihood to eventually find work, as length of time unemployed is linked to increasing difficulty in finding work (ABS QLD, 1989:94). The average duration of women's unemployment has increased during the current recession to nine months in August, 1991 - a longer period than during the 1982 recession. However, the rate is much higher for NESB women - around eleven months. While for the ESB and Australian born population, the rate is considerably lower for women than men, during this recession NESB women's average duration of unemployment has caught up with that of NESB men's which in August 1991 was also around forty-nine weeks (ABS, The Labour Force, Australia).

Another measure reflecting the severity of NESB women's unemployment is the fact that fewer had experienced full-time work recently. As of November, 1990, while around half of Australian born and other ESB unemployed women had worked full-time for two weeks or more in the last two years, the corresponding figure for NESB women was little over a third (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:33).

### *Incidence of unemployment by age*

Female unemployment is concentrated among the young (whose unemployment rate as of May, 1991 was 28 per cent) and the old. Women aged 35-54 had the lowest comparative levels of unemployment in the period April 1990 - April 1991 (DEET, 1991:7). While it is not possible to utilise the labour force survey figures for NESB by age, due to small sample sizes, it is interesting to note that among NESB women the young and the old tend to have disproportionately low labour force participation rates compared with the Australian born (ABS, Brisbane, 1992). If 15-19 year old NESB women participated in the workforce at the same rate (that is, 58 per cent compared with 40 per cent), the overall rates for NESB female unemployment would be even greater[1].

### Participation in the paid workforce and types of employment

### *High rates of female labour force participation*

An observed phenomenon that tends to corroborate the image of women doing better than men in the current recession is the fact that women's labour force participation rates have been at historically high levels, increasing consistently through the 1980s and then remaining fairly stable at around 52 per cent during the current recession (DEET, 1991:5). Male rates have been falling in the same period, from 77 per cent in 1982-3 to less than 75.0 per cent in 1991, the lowest rates ever recorded.

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[1] A possible offsetting factor is the fact that the age distribution of NESB women is skewed towards the older age groups.

The DEET Women's Bureau has suggested that a number of factors may be responsible, including the financial pressures on women placed by high interest rates, spousal job-loss and the continuing expansion of part-time employment opportunities (DEET, 1991:5). This last factor needs to be assessed differently in the case of NESB women (see also Section 2).

### *Growth in part-time work*

As in the 1970s, much of the increase in women's employment in the 1980s has been in part-time jobs - 50 per cent of the extra female jobs created since 1982-3 have been part-time, and during the 1980s women have made up around three-quarters of part-time workers. However, during the current recession, there appears to have been a marked trend of part-time jobs being substituted for full-time ones (so-called 'short-time working') particularly in male employment. For the first time men have been experiencing a greater growth in part-time work than women, accompanied by a drop in full-time work.

**Table 27: Percentage change in jobs between 5/1989 - 11/1990**

| | Female (%) | Male (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Full-time | 2.8 | -0.6 |
| Part-time | 5.2 | 8.5 |
| All | 3.7 | 0.1 |

Source: The Labour Force, Australia, 1989 and 1990

Where do NESB women stand in relation to these trends?

### *NESB women - participation rates*

First, NESB women's participation in the labour force has *decreased* rather than increased during the 1980s. While that of Australian born women has grown by around 10 per cent between 1979 and 1990, the participation rate of NESB women has fallen by 2 per cent (see Section 2). As stated, this has been partly due to the low participation rates of younger and older NESB women in the workforce. It is also be linked to NESB women's under-representation in part-time employment - the big growth area. (Roughly one-third of NESB women are in part-time employment compared with 42 per cent of Australian born women - see Section 2).

During the 1982-3 recession, the participation rates of women generally levelled off, before increasing again, and those of married women fell. However, those of NESB women continued to fall. It is necessary to look at what has happened to NESB women during the current recession, remembering that the global figures for women indicate stability.

During an eighteen-month period, the following changes occurred.

**Table 28: Labour force participation: women by birthplace, May 1989 - August 1991**

| Birthplace | May 1989 (%) | August 1991 (%) | Change (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 53.8 | 53.8 | 0.0 |
| ES countries | 52.5 | 54.9 | 2.4 |
| NES countries | 47.1 | 45.2 | -1.9 |
| All | 52.6 | 52.6 | 0.0 |

Source: The Labour Force, Australia, August, 1991

***NESB women and part-time work***

Unlike other women, NESB women appear to have been retreating from the labour force during the current recession. Other figures show that they have not been as able to hang on to jobs - that is, that total employment for NESB women has *fallen* in recent months, while for other women it has risen. One of the biggest differences accounting for this is their loss of *part-time* jobs in the period. The following table compares Australian born and NESB women:

**Table 29: Percentage change in female jobs between 5/1989 - 11/1990**

| | Australian born (%) | NESB (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Full-time | 1.8 | 1.4 |
| Part-time | 6.9 | -2.7 |
| All | 3.9 | -0.7 |

Source: The Labour Force, Australia, 1989 and 1990

Indeed, NESB women are the only group to have shown a drop in part-time employment, in a period marked, as noted above, by considerable substitution of full-time for part-time jobs, and consequent increases in the latter. The part-time employment of NESB men, for example, increased by 9.4 per cent in the same period. Why NESB women have not kept part-time work, but seem rather to have lost jobs altogether, is a question for further investigation, though it may be noted here that part-time work is spread unevenly across both industrial sectors and birthplace groups[2].

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[2] Casey provides regional birthplace figures for part-time versus full-time work suggesting that among Asian and Southern European women rates of full-time work are particularly high (c. 70 per cent). This contradicts Collins' analysis for NSW which showed a trend during the 1980s for

They are however, still doing better than NESB men, whose participation rates have not only been dropping significantly throughout the 1980s but whose participation has decreased by 2.8 per cent to just over 70 per cent in the period treated above.

### *Hidden unemployment*

While the analysis of unemployment given above is based on official unemployment rates, it is widely believed that much unemployment remains 'hidden' (see, Collins 1988, 1989). Stricker and Sheehan have argued that NESB immigrants are particularly concentrated among the 'hidden unemployed', those who respond to the recession by withdrawing themselves from the labour force and therefore from the count of the officially unemployed.

Discouraged job-seekers form one component of a larger pool of people 'marginally attached' to the workforce - that is, those who would, in different circumstances, like to work. Their failure to move into the labour force (because of various perceived obstacles) again acts to lower the unemployment rate, and the failure to 'register' as unemployed is likely to systematically discriminate against their participation in labour market programs. Three-quarters of these are women, who may be 'marginally attached' to the workforce because of family responsibilities (lack of affordable childcare), personal reasons, less ability to travel than men or because they are discouraged jobseekers.

From September 1989 - September 1990 there was a large jump in the numbers of those 'marginally attached' to the workforce - (a total of 557,100 women in September 1990). Fifteen per cent of these (76,600) described themselves as 'discouraged job seekers' (DEET, 1991:2). 'This implies that while inroads have been made towards holding onto the jobs in the primary labour market there is still a significant pool of women who operate in the secondary labour market[3], moving in and out in tune with the business cycle' (DEET, 1991:8).

Thus there appears to be a paradox. During the current recession, women's labour force participation has been increasing or remaining stable, but there has also been a big increase in the numbers of 'marginally attached', suggesting 'unprecedented levels of supply' as well as considerable hidden unemployment.

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Italian and Greek women to lose full-time jobs and increase their part-time employment substantially (Collins 1989).

[3] The secondary labour market refers to small and medium firms where employment is typically fluctuating and unstable, and consists of low-skilled and dead-end jobs.

### *Retrenchment*

The industry groups most affected by the current recession have been the construction and manufacturing industries, although the wholesale and retail trade, a large employer of NESB women has also been affected. Tradespeople and lower skilled groups have been bearing the brunt of job losses in the current recession (DEET, 1991:9).

In May 1991, 86,200 unemployed males and 28,800 females identified manufacturing as the industry of their last full-time employment, with more than half of each citing retrenchment as the cause of their unemployment (DEET, 1991:10). The biggest group of unemployed females listed the retail and wholesale industries as their last area of employment (43,400).

The industry categories to have shown the biggest proportional female job loss during the period February 1990 - February 1990 (after mining, a very small category) were:

- finance, property and business services (-5.0 per cent)
- recreation, personal and other services (-3.2 per cent)
- manufacturing (-1.9 per cent).

ABS labour force survey data can be used to investigate patterns of job change, showing which workforce groups have lost the most jobs during the recession. It must be stressed that because of small cell sizes in some cases, there is the probability of error in relation to some inferences. The following table gives the figures for job loss between May and August 1991. These figures, while preliminary, clearly show the concentration of job loss among NESB men and women, and particularly among NESB women.

**Table 30: Change in men's jobs over the six-month period, May-August, 1991**

| Birthplace | Change in nos. of jobs | |
|---|---|---|
| | Numbers | (%) |
| Australia | -10,000 | -0.3 |
| ES countries | -18,000 | -7.6 |
| NES countries | -24,000 | -3.6 |
| All | -52,000 | -1.2 |

Source: The Australian Labour Force, 1991

**Table 31: Change in women's jobs over the six-month period, May-August, 1991**

| Birthplace | Change in nos. of jobs | |
|---|---|---|
| | Numbers | (%) |
| Australia | -12,000 | -0.5 |
| ES countries | 0 | 0 |
| NES countries | -5,000 | -1.3 |
| All | -17,000 | -0.5 |

Source: The Australian Labour Force, 1991

## NESB women and the manufacturing industry in the current recession

After an exhaustive analysis of successive censuses, Webber et al argue that in the 1970s, women lost jobs from manufacturing more quickly than men. This trend was reversed in the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s, men have been more concentrated in declining industries. In addition, women have been replacing men within these industries. Webber et al also show how, contrary to popular opinion, the Australian born have been replacing the overseas born since the early 1970s. The picture seems to have reverted to that of the early 1970s, with NESB women losing jobs overall as fast as NESB men, faster than men in manufacturing and faster than Anglo-Australian women everywhere, especially in manufacturing.

While the jobs held by men in manufacturing have been lost at a rate similar to the jobs of men in other sectors, the jobs of women in manufacturing have been lost faster than elsewhere. During the August quarter, for example, 7,000 of the 17,000 female jobs lost were lost from manufacturing. A large proportion of these jobs (4,200) came from the category 'other manufacturing' which contains textiles, clothing and footwear.

This means that almost a quarter of the total jobs lost by women were lost from the TCF industries, although they contain only 8 per cent of total female jobs. Even more striking is the 'ethnicity' of those losing jobs. Some 3,300 out of the 4,200 were NESB, a decline of 4.8 per cent. Nearly 15,000 jobs were lost in Victoria alone in the period 1988 - 1991 (Yeatman, 1992:16).

The manufacturing sector has been traditionally a key source of employment for NESB women, and particularly for recently arrived NESB women (see Section 2). The importance, from a policy perspective, of examining how it has responded during the current recession can be seen from the following:

- the manufacturing industry is a declining sector in Australia, and has been particularly vulnerable to economic downturns, the falling exchange rate and international competition, with the consequence that significant job loss from the manufacturing industry takes place during economic recession in Australia; in some sections of the manufacturing industry, the effects of the recession have been compounded by tariff reduction and other government-sponsered processes of restructuring, compounding the job loss;

- NESB women who have worked in manufacturing have tended to be concentrated in low-skilled occupations which have not provided the opportunities for training, English language learning or career mobility. So, once retrenched, they have found it particularly difficult to obtain re-employment;
- employment in the manufacturing industry has exposed NESB women to high rates of occupational injury and disease, often resulting in turn, to permanent partial incapacity and to increased vulnerability to retrenchment in times of economic recession (see Alcorso and Schofield, 1991);
- many of the birthplace groups currently over-represented in manufacturing (for example, Italian, Greek, Yugoslav, Polish, Turkish and Cypriot women) are middle-aged or older and are therefore also likely targets for redundancy if a company wishes to shed jobs. Such women are also likely to experience particular difficulties in finding alternative employment in the current economic climate[4].
- NESB women, retrenched from manufacturing factories are one of the groups most likely to take on home-based manufacturing work, or outwork. Consequently, they tend to disappear from official statistical collections;
- specific groups are particularly vulnerable to job loss as a result of having more than 30 per cent of their total employment in manufacturing. These are Greek, Yugoslav, Cypriot, Turkish and Vietnamese women. In addition, Greek, Italian, Yugoslav, Polish, Turkish and Vietnamese women are concentrated in lower skilled occupations within manufacturing. Consequently, they are also vulnerable to job losses.

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[4] A recent ABS survey on the job search experience of unemployed persons (July, 1990), found that 'being considered too young or too old' was the most common reason for their unemployment given by overseas born women. It accounted for 17 per cent of respondents. By comparison, only 7 per cent of Australian born women gave this answer. 'No vacancies at all' was the most common answer given by Australian born women (ABS, Brisbane, 1992).

### The recession and specific birthplace groups

As we have seen in Sections 1 and 2, specific birthplace groups exhibit much higher levels of unemployment than others. Consequently, the use of the NESB category tends to obscure a great range of labour force outcomes. It is difficult to obtain information about all birthplace groups from the labour force surveys due to the size of the samples. This is not the case with census data.

While previous censuses do not provide information specifically about the current recession, they can give an indication of the comparative unemployment rates of specific groups of women. The fact that the most recent (1991) Census took place *during* a recession will allow a fuller analysis of the impact of recession on different social groups. Age-controlled figures from the 1986 Census showed the markedly different rates for a selection of birthplaces:

**Table 32: Unemployment rates by birthplace, controlling for age, 1986**

| Birthplace | Unemployment rate (%) |
|---|---|
| Australia | 8.7 |
| Italy | 7.6 |
| Hong Kong | 9.5 |
| Greece | 11.3 |
| New Zealand | 12.2 |
| Poland | 19.2 |
| Lebanon | 30.8 |
| Turkey | 30.9 |
| Vietnam | 42.1 |

Source: The Australian Labour Force, 1991

Moreover, it is clear that unemployment rates also vary across states and regions (see, for example, Collins, 1989 for the higher figures for some regions in NSW).

## Labour market programs in the recession

Since the recession, increasing numbers of women have entered and completed labour market programs, as the following figures show:

**Table 33: Women completing labour market programs, 1988-91**

| Year | Numbers of women |
|---|---|
| 1988-9 | 22,121 |
| 1989-90 | 48,472 |
| 7/90 - 4/91 | 57,569 |

Source: DEET, 1991:14

DEET, which funds labour market programs (LMPs), only keeps records on whether or not a client is 'overseas born with English language difficulties'. Specific birthplace data is not recorded, so that participation figures cannot be compared with labour force survey figures. This makes it impossible to assess whether NESB women are in fact gaining equitable access to labour market programs.

It is, however, possible to assess outcomes. DEET figures for the twelve months to September 1991 show a slightly higher proportion of 'overseas born with English language difficulties' (ELD) obtained positive outcomes than other participants.

**Table 34: Labour Market Programs - outcomes by birthplace group, 1990**

| Birthplace | Number of known outcomes | Positive outcomes* (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Overseas born women with ELD | 6,494 | 44.6 |
| All women | 60,981 | 45.3 |
| Overseas born with ELD | 12,842 | 44.6 |
| All | 113,376 | 41.1 |

* 'Positive outcomes' are defined by DEET as full or part-time employment, or a place in further education - not a DEET LMP.

Source: DEET, unpublished data, 1991

Women outnumber men in most types of Commonwealth LMPs. However, the measure for success is the gaining of employment following a LMP. DEET (1991:12) notes that the figures for the period 1988-9 suggest that women do less well than men in labour market programs. They register less success in gaining employment following a program and exit to withdrawal from the labour force more often. From 1991, however, DEET has included 'exiting to further education' in the definition of a 'positive outcome.' As the table above shows, once this definitional change has occurred, women register similar proportions of 'successful' outcomes to men. Further education is a more likely 'positive outcome' for overseas born females with ELD than for women generally, among whom employment is a more likely 'positive outcome'.

## Conclusion

During the recent 1990-2 recession, NESB women have suffered disproportionately from job loss compared to both NESB men and Australian born women. Although this recession is unusual in that women's labour force particpation rates have remained high, and their unemployment rates slightly lower than those of men, it appears that this pattern only pertains to ESB and Australian born women.

NESB women, partly because of their concentration in economically precarious industries, have experienced a further marginalisation in terms of the labour market during the last two years. Although the size of the sample means that it is not possible to analyse labour force survey figures by individual birthplace group, analysis of non-recessionary unemployment rates from the 1986 Census indicates that there is likely to be extreme variation among NESB women, with Vietnamese, Turkish and Vietnamese women, and newly arrived women generally, suffering the greatest unemployment.

## SECTION 4: ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON NESB WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Through the 1980s, and particularly in recent years, a body of literature on the status of immigrants in Australian society has emerged, much of it produced with government funding and guided by government policy agendas. Central questions addressed by this literature include:

- how have immigrants fared in Australian society in terms of employment, income and business success? and
- what are the factors which predispose immigrants to economic and social success or failure (measured in quantitative terms) in Australia?

This report does not review this literature in detail, but here some comments on it in relation to NESB women and the labour force will be made. The focus is on how information is analysed, what type of information is considered to be relevant and the different ways in which the issue of 'migrant disadvantage' is currently approached.

It can be argued that, to date, there has been a tendency to ignore the community-based research on NESB women that has been carried out in the 1970s and 1980s in favour of large-scale sample studies. The implications of much of the qualitative and in-depth research conducted by academic researchers also tend to be overlooked in recent quantitative reports.

The community-based, usually qualitative literature includes immigrant women's 'speakouts', oral histories, reports of action research projects and even the annual reports of community organisations. Unlike the quantitative studies, they graphically document the ways in which NESB women are subject to discrimination and exploitation within the paid workforce in Australia. They further suggest that NESB women comprise a distinct labour market segment whose work experience is typified by characteristics such as high unemployment, confinement to dangerous, dirty and low-paid blue-collar jobs and downward occupational mobility[1].

The conclusions that can be drawn from this literature correspond closely to those of the more academic studies undertaken by writers who may be seen as belonging to the school of the 'political economy of migration and ethnic relations' (Castles, 1987:25-8).

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[1] See for examle, Storer et al, 1976, National Women's Advisory Council, 1979, Australian Council of Churches, 1981.

Those studies that are based on large-scale aggregated data, however, have tended to reject the structural explanations of immigrant labour market experiences posed by Castles, Collins and community-based researchers. Instead, these aggregated studies prefer to concentrate on the market-relevant capacities (so-called 'human capital endowments') of the immigrants themselves. Discrimination is thus relegated to the realm of an inter-personal practice, and typically, little evidence is found for it, once the lower 'human capital' of many NESB immigrants (especially women) is taken into account.

In addition, many of the issues raised in the qualitative literature (for example, outwork) are ignored or not treated in depth, partly because, as we have argued earlier, they are not always identifiable through the use of the standard ABS data collection techniques. These comments also apply to a number of research reports on immigrant economic status that have been released by the Bureau of Immigration Research during 1990-2[2].

The Bureau's reports significantly add to the amount of information available on NESB women workers. However, many share the methodological assumptions of, and reach conclusions consistent with, human capital theory. The conclusions reached by the ABS, Brisbane, after analysis of immigrant women's labour force experiences, for example, demonstrate this perspective:

> **This study shows that the category of admission of immigrant, which can be a reflection of other characteristics such as education, qualifications, wealth, ... is a major determining factor in an immigrant's labour force behaviour and resultant economic status in Australia (ABS, Brisbane, 1992:81).**

The 'human capital' approach has been criticised on methodological grounds elsewhere[3], and this technical discussion will not be continued here. However, the debate about migrant disadvantage is described briefly below. Subsequently, this report argues for an approach which seeks to bring together the quantitative and the qualitative literature more successfully than has been the case in the past.

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[2] Wooden, 1990; ABS, Queensland, 1990, and ABS, Brisbane, 1992.

[3] Most recently, in Morrissey et al, 1992: 9.

## Human capital theory

This theory, based on orthodox economics, stresses the marginal productivity of labour and seeks to explain immigrant disadvantage in terms of the different capacities and skills ('human capital') that immigrants have vis a vis the Australian born population. This type of analysis has been characterised by the use of sophisticated statistical methods, and a view of immigrants as economic subjects making choices in a rational market system.

Jonathon Kelly and Ian McAllister have been early influential proponents of the human capital approach in the immigration field, using data from the 1973 ANU Social Mobility Survey as well as census material to compare the performance of the overseas born and the Australian born in the labour market. In 1984, they concluded that:

> ... immigrants face no disadvantage in competing for jobs or in the earnings they receive for their labour and they get the same jobs and pay as do native born workers with equal skills, knowledge and the like (1984:401).

Analysing the situation of immigrant women, Mariah Evans reached similar conclusions:

> the Australian labour market appears to be nearly blind to ethnicity, except that Mediterranean women with little education get better jobs than their Australian peers ... It is likely that the labour market treats everybody about equally (Evans, 1984:1087).

The community-based and/or qualitative research literature described above is typically ignored in such studies, or is dismissed as biased and unduly pessimistic (see, for example, Seitz, 1986, Wooden, 1990). Niland and Champion, summarising recent reports from a standpoint sympathetic to human capital theory, reproduce this attitude towards community literature:

> Statistics may confound case studies, especially if the case studies are compiled by *strong advocates for various policy options* ... (Wooden) concludes that descriptive (sic) studies tend to over-estimate the extent of disadvantage experienced by immigrant workers ... Much of (this disadvantage) can be ascribed to a 'settlement effect' ...which tends to be overcome within a few years and does not apply to the children of immigrants ... (1991:5-6, author's emphasis).

## Segmented labour market theory

The basic concept underlying segmentation theory is that there are several specific job markets in advanced Western societies, comprising jobs that differ systematically in terms of their rewards, and that there is limited mobility between them. In other words, different job structures are generated. Segmented labour market theorists, reflecting on the US experience, argue that these job structures, in turn, systematically attract and exclude different groups of workers. This occurs on the basis of non-rational characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity.

Those using segmented labour market theory stress the importance of the 'demand side' - the imperatives of production and social structures generally, in shaping the experiences of different groups of workers. They emphasise a historical understanding of the way labour and ethnic relations function in advanced industrial societies, to produce different patterned outcomes for different social groups.

Proponents of the theory vary on the extent to which they focus either more or less on identifying segments in terms of occupational and industrial structures; or, in terms of groups of workers.

The latter approach has been dominant among those seeking to use political economics to describe and explain the distinctive experiences of ethnic groups in Australia. It is argued that in the post-war period, international 'reserve armies' of labour, imported as immigrants, were drawn on, not just to expand the labour force, but to expand particular sections of it. These were the areas of unskilled and semi-skilled manual work that insufficient numbers of local workers wanted to do.

Jock Collins proposed a four-fold grouping that has become entrenched in subsequent literature (see Collins, 1975, and 1988:80 and Castles et al 1988). His four segments are:

- Australian born and other ESB men
- NESB men
- Australian born and other ESB women and
- NESB women.

Collins also notes that the employment experiences of North European men and women are more like those of the Australian born groups than the other NESB immigrants.

Obviously, the two categories, NESB/ESB, intersected with gender, are also widely used by other analysts and by government generally, as a way of pointing to patterns of social disadvantage. However, those adopting the 'political economy' approach, not only 'notice' that NESB and ESB women and men have different social outcomes in terms of indicators such as income, but invoke labour market segmentation processes to explain these distinctive outcomes.

Thus, Collins argues that the four segments proposed above correspond to the following types of employment which typify the labour force experience of each group:

- high status professional and administrative jobs and skilled trades
- semi-skilled and unskilled production jobs in manufacturing
- white-collar (mainly clerical) jobs
- blue-collar jobs in manufacturing.

### *Criticisms of segmented labour market theory*

The Australian use of labour market segmentation theory has been criticised for failing to explore the processes by which industrial and occupational concentrations of workers are built up. As well, it is seen to concentrate on the characteristics of workers rather than on the demand for their services created by different industrial structures (see, Campbell et al, 1991).

In fact the definition of segments has often moved between defining types of jobs and defining types of workers; see, for example, Castles et al 1991. Castles proposes a fifth 'segment', the self-employed - thereby reverting to occupational structure rather than worker characteristics as evidence of segmentation.

There are also concerns about the extent to which the categories relate to real groupings in the labour market. The typological approach has tended to sit uneasily with observations about the uniqueness of different NESB (and ESB) birthplace groups and the contrasts between them. Thus in a recent report on ethnic entrepreneurship, Castles et al suggest that the division NESB/ESB does not describe adequately the way women are concentrated industrially. For instance, Indian, Egyptian, Sri Lankan and Malaysian women are well-represented in the service industries, along with ESB women (Castles et al, 1989). Analysis in the previous sections of this report has also emphasised the misleading results of treating NESB women as if they were a single group.

### *Occupational and industrial clusters*

A Melbourne-based group of geographers has examined in depth the basis for such categories using a statistical process known as 'cluster analysis'. 'Clusters' refer here to groups in the population with similar labour force experiences. Campbell, Webber and Fincher accept that "the idea of segments separated by barriers has ... the virtue of describing the reality of employment experiences in contemporary societies" (Campbell et al, 1991:173). However, the authors' examination of the manufacturing industry in the period 1971-86 leads them to qualify the view that the categories NESB/ESB constitute segments in the rigorous sense either for women or men, or for immigrants as a whole.

They argue that:

> the industrial employment patterns of birthplace and gender groups are more complicated ... female birthplace groups are aligned differently from male birthplace groups; ... among males, the North European/English speaking cluster does not hang well together; ... except at the coarsest level, some birthplace groups are quite distinct from all others, particularly Turkish, Yugoslav, and (more recently) Vietnamese men and women ... and fourthly, there have been some interesting evolutions of alignment over time ... for example, Lebanese women (Webber et al, 1989:26).

A further difficulty is that the clustering of birthplace groups varies spatially (that is, regionally) to a considerable degree: "the ethnic and gender compositions of workforces vary widely across cities, and no place has the average. *No actual labour market has the characteristics that are portrayed in the Australia-wide statistical descriptions ...* " (1989:67, author's emphasis).

Webber et al adopt the distinction between *core* and *peripheral* birthplace groups to refer to those who form part of a cluster in every mainland city (core) and those whose membership varies. In addition there are 'floaters' who do not participate consistently in any one cluster.

In so far as the divisions NESB/ESB have relevance, Webber et al find that it is because of occupational rather than industrial similarities. It seems that Australian labour markets can be better divided into such groupings on the basis of occupation than on the basis of industrial location, where the membership of clusters fluctuates further (1989:9).

### *Occupational clusters and NESB women*

Despite their reservations, Webber et al conclude that the clusters of birthplace groups that do exist are quite stable over time, indicating that they are not a chance phenomenon but arise out of social processes internal to Australian society. They find that clusters centred around NESB women are particularly consistent, both across time and across the five mainland capitals. The following diagram depicts the situation in terms of occupational clustering for females in the manufacturing industry in 1986.

Cluster 1 - orientation towards non-manual work
**Core - UK and Ireland, New Zealand**
**Austria, Germany, India, Netherlands**

Periphery - Australia, Other Africa

Cluster 2 - orientation towards manual work
**Core - Yugoslavia, Greece, Italy, Poland,**
**Other Asia,**

Periphery - Vietnam, China, Cyprus, Spain, Other America, Other Europe, Other Oceania

Cluster 3 - orientation towards managerial, professional work
**Core - USA**

Floaters - Canada, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, USSR, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Malta, Lebanon, Turkey, Malaysia.

Source: derived from Webber et al, 1989:140

It can be seen from the above that Clusters 1 and 2 can only be loosely described as ESB/NESB respectively, and that a large number of birthplaces fall outside these core groupings.

However, it should also be noted that in many cases, the status of 'floaters' and 'peripherals' derives from the peculiarities of their position in the smaller mainland capitals, Perth and Brisbane; and to a lesser extent, Adelaide. For example, Lebanese women form part of the core Cluster 2 in Sydney and Melbourne where they are overwhelmingly concentrated. The same is true of Vietnamese women in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. It is only in Brisbane that they have quite a different occupational profile, with many more in management and administration and in the occupational category of clerks (Webber et al, 1989:137). Indeed, the clarity and consistency of the clustering in Melbourne and Sydney (the NESB population centres) somewhat weakens Webber et al's critique of labour market segmentation theory.

The issues raised in considering labour market segmentation and NESB women are important from a policy perspective. First, there is considerable evidence for a historically consistent patterning of labour market experience by gender and ethnicity in Australia. This is despite the changes over time and even though many birthplaces fall outside the core groups in some cities.

There appear to be processes operating in the Australian economy which perpetuate the association of certain gender and birthplace groups with certain types of industries and occupations, particularly the latter. Next, this patterning is more evident for female than male migrants, and it also appears that female migrants are more occupationally segregated than males.

Consequently, strategies designed to overcome labour market segmentation are particularly important for NESB women, and these should aim to create new and broader occupational opportunities and channels for NESB women.

Finally, the notion of the segmentation of labour markets is important for understanding the likely effects of a recession and industrial restructuring on migrant women. The particular patterns occurring in specific *regional* labour markets such as the Hunter or the Illawarra in NSW may well lead to triple disadvantage in this respect (see also Webber et al, 1989:121).

### Qualitative and community-based literature

> Hundreds of workers have passed through our Workers' Health Centre. Most of them are women who have been, or are being injured at work. These people often feel almost sub-human because of the way they have been mistreated in factories and the amount of time they have spent in bad conditions. These people may not have come to Australia with degrees and diplomas, but they are still human beings. Most are mothers. ... Their skills lay in their knitting, crochet, sewing, cooking good food, making their gardens and vegetable plots, and also in using different machines in clothing, textiles and other factories to produce goods for our society. Many of us have lost all these skills now. How sad this is. .... To be able to work with injured migrant people has taught me many things. When I was at home sick, I thought it was just me, that I was at fault, that I was crazy. After I started work I understood that it was the system of work that was bad, not me. This was a very important realisation for me, to understand something about society (Halvatzis, 1986:21).

As noted earlier, the qualitative and community-based literature has, since the 1970s in Australia, tended to have a sharp focus on the socially generated sources of disadvantage affecting NESB women. Two of the earliest significant studies of migrant women workers were ***We cannot talk our rights***, (Cox, Jobson and Martin, 1976) and ***But I wouldn't want my wife to work here*** (Storer et al, 1976).

The first was based on in-depth interviews with immigrant and Australian born women in Sydney. The second was conducted by a community centre and involved action research with 710 NESB women factory-workers in Melbourne.

Both graphically documented the pressures on NESB immigrant women in the paid workforce, and linked them to the conditions prevalent in Australian society. In the first case, the systematic neglect of working mothers in Australia was identified as a source of the contradictory and irresolvable pressures on NESB women. In the second, the basic source of NESB women's oppressive work situations was seen to be the structure of work and the economy in Australia. Capitalism, structurally, was seen as leading to the deployment of regimented and inhuman work systems and low wages, preventing the rectification of unhealthy and dangerous worksites where the workforce comprised the least powerful sections of the community.

Since these early studies, a genre of community-based, often qualitative studies, has slowly developed, documenting the experiences of NESB women in the workforce and examining the sources of their difficulties. Often written as reports or perhaps as submissions to government inquiries, they are usually unashamedly committed; written above all to prompt action to remedy the problems that migrant women face. Women's stories, in the form of first-hand accounts or case studies, form an important part of this literature, making it far more accessible and understandable than the quantitative literature discussed earlier.

In many cases, however, reports and pamphlets such as these are not widely published and reach only a limited audience.

Some areas of NESB women's experiences sensitively examined in this literature include:

- unemployment and finding work (National Women's Advisory Council, 1979, Burbridge, Caputo and Rosenblatt, 1982, Alcorso, 1991, Fincher, Webber and Campbell, 1989, Pittaway, 1991, Tran and Holton, 1991)
- workplace hazards and occupational illness (National Women's Advisory Council, 1979, Casey and Yaman, 1980, Australian Council of Churches, 1983, Mesaritis, 1984, Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission, 1988)
- suffering repetition strain injury and being on workers' compensation (Casey and Yaman, 1980, Western Region Centre for Working Women, 1983, Blackett-Smith and Rubenstein, 1985, Alcorso, 1988)
- wage-systems, especially piece-work (Australian Council of Churches, 1983, Halvatzis, 1986, Windsor and Pocock, 1989)
- sex-based harassment at work (NSW ECC, 1981, DIEA, 1986)
- relations with trade unions (SBS, 1988, Yeatman, 1992)

- outwork (Flood, Baker and Meekosha, 1982, Western Region Centre for Working Women, 1983, Centre for Working Women, 1986).

Journals such as ***Migration Action*** have also been a consistent source of such material. This material offers us insights into the process of segmentation. It allows us to examine, from the perspective of employees, their concerns about initial entry into the workforce and their lack of mobility after they are employed.

### Processes of initial job allocation

The entry into the workforce in Australia for NESB women after immigrating is characteristically an entry from unpaid work or a higher status occupation into lower skilled jobs in manufacturing. An important finding in recent studies is the commonality of the experiences of the earlier arriving groups and those arriving later (for example, Vietnamese), despite the decline in manufacturing as a whole. Thus there appear to be allocative mechanisms that are not related either to women's prior experience and skills or to the state of the economy and particular industry sectors. Some of the processes of allocation which lead to labour market segmentation are discussed next

#### *Job-search strategies*

> 'Refugees arrive sick and broken and we are offered heavy manual work ' (Salvadorean woman, quoted in Pittaway, 1991:50).

Community studies indicate a widely reported dissatisfaction with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES). Two aspects in particular are relevant. First, it seems that some CES staff often reflect and reproduce the segmentation of the labour market in advising NESB women about their work options. They ignore previous levels of education in the women's country of origin and assume that the only work they can do is factory work.

The suggestion from government agencies that NESB women shouldn't bother to look for work at all, is apparently not uncommon. Women in Pittaway's study reported: 'They think we are a joke'. 'Go away and learn English', or 'You are too old' (a 42 year-old Vietnamese woman commenting on her experiences with the CES).

Next, and partly as a result of the above, there appears to be a reliance by NESB women on informal networks, rather than formal channels, as a means of finding work. The likely conservative effects of this have been remarked on in many studies. One study of newly arrived women found that:

> Migrant workers know the jobs that migrant men and women from different countries perform in Australia and use this knowledge to help friends and compatriots to get work. Despite the existence of ...the CES, migrant women today, as in past years, are more likely to find a job through a friend or relative; often in the same factory or company as the latter (Alcorso, 1991:104).

A recent survey of large employers corroborated workers' reports that reliance on unsolicited applications and word-of-mouth recruiting was widespread for labouring jobs in the construction and manufacturing industries, and was indeed favoured by these employers, despite the obvious implications of inequity (Niland and Champion, 1990:43).

### *The under-utilisation of migrants' overseas-gained skills*

> Valuable skills and talent are being wasted whereas these women could be making a vital contribution to Australia's economy (Immigrant Women's Speakout Association, 1991).

The way in which the non-recognition of overseas qualifications contributes to the downward mobility of migrants in Australia has been well-documented (see, for example, Mitchell et al, 1989). Perhaps best known are the institutional impediments to the recognition of professional and trade qualifications gained in non-English speaking countries. Of equal importance is the tendency for Australian employers to undervalue overseas training and experience.

Interviews with NESB migrants in manufacturing found that male migrants tend to be more aggressive in the pursuit of overseas qualifications recognition than females (Fincher, Webber and Campbell, 1989). Other research suggests that private enterprises may be more flexible in accepting overseas qualifications than employers in the public sector (Niland and Champion, 1990:47). However, this latter seems to occur more in the case of technical (typically male-dominated) occupations where skills tests can be carried out within the enterprise.

The lack of recognition of the overseas-gained qualifications and experience of lower-skilled workers (as opposed to tradespeople) in manufacturing has also been seen as a factor disadvantaging NESB women workers (Herbert, 1990:52).

### *Access to English language proficiency*

Studies show that women are less likely to learn English in Australia after arrival, and that they utilise different means when they do learn. In particular, women are unlikely to use night classes, and in two studies reported difficulty in learning through general conversation or listening to others. This was because of their more segregated occupational position than immigrant men and their general isolation from Australian culture (Alcorso, 1991 and Fincher et al, 1989). Childcare and transport difficulties have repeatedly been cited in studies of NESB women's access to education and training (see, for example, forthcoming: 32 and Munir and Krasovitsky, 1992). The latter report has also documented the low participation of women in workplace English classes.

However, employers' judgements about the low proficiency of women with accented English have also been commented on in qualitative research. These judgements may have nothing to do with actual proficiency in English. Moreover, employer's demands for particular English levels among their employees may not be based on the actual level of English required to successfully perform a job.

Community-based studies, frequently arguing in favour of income support for English language learners, have also argued that access to high levels of English language proficiency, rather than simply 'communicative competence' is necessary to counter this type of discrimination in the labour market.

Qualitative studies have emphasised the way in which lack of English language proficiency can be a factor preventing NESB women workers from recognising and acting on their rights at the workplace or in the labour market generally, and obtaining assistance from community and social services.

### *Unequal employment opportunity*

Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs in both the public and the private sectors have, to date, rarely targetted immigrant women. Governments as major employers have achieved relatively little for them; and gains that have been made in recent years have often been off-set by the contraction of the public sector in most states and federally during the 1980s (DIEA, 1986:10).

Employer strategies of recruitment, including the definition of the ideal candidate, the job description, the choice of recruitment channels, the selection procedures and the actual application of selection criteria may all work against the employment of NESB women; albeit in an informal manner (see Campbell et al 1991 and Niland and Champion, 1990 for a discussion of these issues).

In the private sector, however, the principles of equal employment opportunity are less adhered to. One recent example is the discrimination reported against the employment of Muslim women who adhere to the Islamic dress code, a practice reportedly becoming more common during and after the Gulf War. During a government consultation held during this period it was reported that 'many highly educated, qualified Muslim women are pre-judged when they present themselves in places of employment; either when applying for jobs or seeking promotions. They are seen as not suitable, without being given the opportunity to prove their capabilities' (Immigrant Women's Speakout, 1991).

A recent study documents the obstacles to the implementation of effective EEO programs for immigrants, even in those enterprises pre-selected for their commitment to so doing (Niland and Champion, 1990). Particularly telling was the response the researchers elicited from half of the enterprises nominated as potential research subjects. In declining to participate, they explained that they had no EEO programs for immigrants because they had no blue-collar workforce! (Niland and Champion, 1990:viii).

### *The expectations and aspirations of NESB women*

The desire to establish financial security as soon as possible after arrival, lack of prior workforce experience, poor work conditions in countries of origin, and little experience of trade unions and industrial rights may partly account for the high levels of exploitation of NESB women workers in Australia. However, it is clear from the qualitative literature that these characteristics are very unevenly distributed across the NESB female workforce. There is no evidence that those women with higher proportions of prior workforce experience and a history of militancy and struggle (for example, Latin American women) fare significantly better in Australian employment.

### Processes impeding mobility

> **Question:** 'What type of job would you prefer?'
> **Answer:** 'All I want is to work like a human being and to be treated like one.'
> 33 year-old Turkish woman who had had four jobs since coming to Australia, all of them in process work (quoted in Burbridge, Caputo and Rosenblatt, 1982:8).

The Melbourne geographical study cited earlier found that while occupational mobility was very slight for all the NESB workers interviewed, it was even more restricted for women. Only three of the 94 women interviewed had improved their occupational position between their first and main job in Australia; 91/94 had remained employed as plant and machine operators and drivers and labourers (Fincher, Webber and

Campbell, 1989:11). This was despite the fact that for women, downward social mobility after arrival in Australia had been more marked than for the men. Of the 31 employed prior to migration, nearly half had worked in the categories of administrators and managers; clerical and sales; professionals and trades.

Alcorso found a similar picture when interviewing recently arrived NESB women in 1989. While there was considerable horizontal mobility of women between similar status jobs, there was much less vertical social mobility between different status jobs (Alcorso, 1991:68). In a recent study of social mobility among Vietnamese Australians, Tran and Holton found that "women do somewhat worse than men in virtually every aspect of social mobility" (1991:174).

Many of the processes impeding social mobility, and preventing a return to a position of similar status to that held prior to emigration, emerge from the qualitative literature. As well as those described above, some others are noted below.

### *The effect of family formation*

> The women say that they work much harder in Australia and that they have no time at all for themselves (Tran and Holton, 1991:92).
>
> One Turkish woman from Auburn told a Speakout worker in mid-1992 that she was sewing elastic around fitted sheets for 40 cents per sheet. She spoke about the pressure of the work, the low pay and the lack of any future career prospects (Alcorso and Abood, forthcoming).

The unequal division of labour within families and households has been shown in several community studies to lead directly to labour market disadvantage for NESB women.

Most obviously, the need to care for children leads women into outwork; indeed, there is evidence from community based workers that husbands frequently seek out outwork for their wives so that they can stay at home (see Alcorso and Abood, forthcoming).

Another typical pattern appears to be that women's pursuit of training, retraining and English language learning is delayed while their husbands' needs take priority.

As 'dependants', and hence not eligible for Social Security benefits, NESB women are less likely than men to register at the CES. Consequently, their access to labour market programs (and in the future from vocational English allocated through the CES) is less than that of men. A recent report on NESB women's access to TAFE, based on national consultations, found that "inadequate provision of childcare services, together with access to English, is the major barrier affecting the participation of NESB women in further education and training" (DEET, 1992:52).

### *The effect of geographical concentration in depressed areas*

In a recent study of the effects of economic and industry restructuring in the Illawara, Morrissey et al note:

> None of the literature we reviewed has much to say about the spatial dimension of the labour market as it affects immigrants. This is a serious problem in that the contracting industries are concentrated in particular areas that are not necessarily the same as those in which jobs in the expanding sector are concentrated. (Also) ... workers are not, for a variety of reasons, perfectly geographically mobile (1992:16).

Morrissey et al's study focused mainly on male immigrant workers. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note its conclusions: namely, that the nature of the regional economy operated to make the effects of the 1980s restructuring more severe on those who were retrenched. At the end of the period, 1980-90, the area had a lower disposable income that at the outset. Consequently, the expansion of the retail industry and service sector generally has been slower than in Australia generally. Thus fewer new jobs were generated for the unemployed (leaving aside the question of whether they could have obtained them).

At the same time,"a considerable proportion of the workforce remained in sectors likely to contract even further in the 1990s - steel, coal, clothing and footwear" (1992:53).

### *Job design and industry restructuring*

The currently topical issues of training, skill and award restructuring have highlighted the fact that the very design of jobs in many traditionally female-dominated areas of work may promote skills wastage, and prevent occupational mobility for NESB women. This is particularly true of many areas of manufacturing work in which migrant women are concentrated (Booth, 1988).

Windsor and Pocock, in a detailed examination of the clothing and textile industries, show how the traditional job structures, which group most workers together as machinists or operators and contain few differentially rewarded positions, prevent career advancement in the industry for most women (Windsor and Pocock, 1989:54 et ff). The situation results from both the narrowness of the jobs themselves (typified by the woman who reported doing shorts for 14 years -"I still haven't learnt to do shirt collars") and secondly, from the fact that real differences in the skills required for and reponsibility involved with different jobs are not reflected in awards or payment systems - 'There's no recognition of effort which is why we all get the same money' (quoted in Windsor and Pocock, 1989:56).

Similar patterns have been identified in the electronics industry, also a significant employer of NESB women (Labour Research Centre, 1991) and in the manufacturing industry generally. A NSW Government report documents the same effects in the health industry, in a study of NESB women hospital cleaners and sterile supply unit staff (NSW Women's Employment and Training Taskforce, 1989).

The only detailed examination of how NESB women are positioned in relation to award and industry restructuring and the changes brought about by more automated technology reaches pessimistic conclusions about the ability of these changes to flow equally to NESB women (Yeatman 1992). Indeed, Yeatman's analysis (based on observations within the clothing industry) suggests that NESB women may be pushed further to the periphery as industry restructuring occurs.

> NESB migrant women workers who are positioned within the 'migrant women's' labour market niche are at high risk of intensification of their already low labour market status. They are prime candidates for affording the various forms of numerical labour market flexibility which contemporary restructuring appears to require (1992:70).

### *Access to training and retraining*

The barriers to the possibility of independent study outside work affect all women but may be considerably more pronounced in the case of NESB women. This is due to the high numbers in full-time employment; lack of access to other social resources such as childcare; concentration in smaller workplaces and lack of English language proficiency, particularly literacy.

Research in the electronics industry found certain employers' perceptions that 'religious and cultural beliefs' restricted NESB women's access to training schemes and promotion opportunities generally (Labour Research Centre, 1991:23). The study also documents a substantial range of institutional factors, such as the ad hoc and unaccredited nature of in-house training and the inappropriate and inaccessible nature of formal training, both of which are likely to prevent NESB women obtaining the training and qualifications needed for promotion in the industry.

Yeatman's study of the clothing industry argues that there has been no genuine commitment on the part of governments or employers to providing the training that would be necessary for NESB women to take advantage of the new award structures. She also emphasises the situation of the majority NESB female clothing workforce, which remains completely excluded form access to training and award structures. These are the women working either for small employers or as outworkers, working at home (1992:72).

A recent video about the effects of industry restructuring on NESB workers has highlighted the way lack of English language proficiency was used at the enterprise level to select workers for redundancy; and the difficulties such workers had in re-entering the labour market (The Fabric of Change, Australian Mosaic, SBS).

### *Organisational culture*

> A 38 year old (Vietnamese born) process worker who had worked for the same employer for virtually all of her nine years in Australia gave three reasons for her feeling (that she had no chance for meaningful promotion within factory work). These were difficulties in English language skills in relation to the mother tongue English speakers in the workforce, reluctance in occupying a senior position which involved ordering other Vietnamese to work, and a feeling of being an outsider in dealing with predominantly Anglo-Australian 'white' supervisors (Tran and Holton, 1991:169).

The diffuse but powerful role of organisational culture in promoting insiders and excluding those perceived as 'outsiders' has emerged as a major issue in several reports. Deliberate employer strategies include separating women from others speaking their language to create a climate of competition rather than solidarity. Less direct processes such as the 'norms' of after-hours socialising have also been documented.

### *Retirement from the formal labour force*

> Another outworker, a Yugoslav woman, was about 45 years old, had worked for years in the metal industry and had developed tenosynovitis. She had been on workers' compensation for six years, but it was inadequate to live on. ... She got the outwork from another older woman who had stopped doing it. ... Her own injury was aggravated ... She is being paid 20 cents a skirt. She works eleven hours a day, 4 days a week so she gets $22.00 for a 44 hour week (Western Region Centre for Working Women, 1983:10).

Many community-based and qualitative studies have remarked on the high proportions of migrant workers for whom the major change in labour market position has been an *exit* from the formal labour force to unemployment or 'retirement'. This has often resulted from work injury and illness, retrenchment or pregnancy and childrearing.

It would appear that enforced post-injury retirement due to the discrimination encountered by compensation recipients and the failure of injury management systems is a particularly powerful allocative mechanism, whereby NESB women are redistributed to pensioner status, 'hidden unemployment' or 'hidden employment' - that is, outwork (see also, Burbridge, Caputo and Rosenblatt, 1982).

All of these experiences operate to create very disrupted and discontinuous employment careers for NESB women, precluding possibilities for career advancement and access to better conditions, training and promotion.

The long periods of time which NESB women are out of work following retrenchment also contribute to further deskilling and loss of status when eventually re-entering the labour force.

## Conclusion

Studies based on labour market segmentation theory or on human capital theory, represent two contrasting approaches to the issue of migrant disadvantage in Australia. While there are broad areas of agreement in the conclusions reached by these different types of analysis, there are also significant differences.

In particular, the latter approach has, in Australia, tended to underemphasise migrant disadvantage and overstate the ability of the market to allocate equitably the social resource of employment. Concurrently, it has tended to focus attention on the so-called 'supply side' - the characteristics and capacities of NESB workers themselves. This perspective overlooks the considerable evidence pointing to the important effects of the 'demand side' - economic, social and industrial structures in Australia - in determining the experiences of NESB women.

This evidence is best found in the body of qualitative and community-based literature that has developed over the 1970s and 1980s. Its NESB woman-centred perspective offers a useful corrective to the abstract statistical approach of some of the human capital-inspired literature.

Labour market segmentation theory has emphasised the way Australia's economic needs, and the policies consequently formulated by successive post-war governments, has created a labour force structured not only by sex but ethnicity. It has not, to date, provided many insights into how segmentation processes actually operate at the 'micro' level. Here, the community-based, qualitative literature is also vital in fleshing out the somewhat general analyses of segmentation theorists. In the latter part of this section some examples of how these mechanisms operate at the level of the individual NESB woman worker are given.

## SECTION 5: END NOTE

Historically, the labour power of immigrants has been central to Australian society. Since white settlement, successive waves of immigrants have literally 'built' and developed the economy, institutions, social relations and culture of contemporary Australia.

In the post-war period, a mass labour migration program has imported nearly five million people to Australia so far. Approximately 60 per cent of the increase in the Australian labour force between 1945 and 1988 has been composed of immigrants and their children. Apart from the enormous contribution of this immigrant population in providing the workforce for industry and commerce, immigration in the post-war period also boosted demand, stimulating the economy overall, and created significant cultural and social change in Australian society which in itself has important economic benefits.

The economic place of NESB women in the post-war labour migration program has characteristically been more complex and ambiguous than that of NESB men. There is no doubt that the unpaid domestic work of immigrant women in setting up homes, establishing families, and servicing husbands who were working overtime or struggling to build up a small business, has been an undervalued but immensely important contribution to Australian society. This has been particularly the case for NESB women who, unlike ESB women, have also had to mediate the unfamiliarity and hostility of Anglo-Australian culture, and to attempt to maintain and reproduce their family's own cultural traditions in this environment.

An unforseen consequence of emigrating to Australia for many NESB women, was the head-long plunge into full-time paid employment, necessitated by high cost of living. Until the 1980s, the rates of labour force participation among NESB women were consistently higher than those of other Australian women.

Analysis carried out in this report shows that this is still true among some groups of immigrant women, and significantly, among those with children. It seems that married NESB women have not shared equally in the employment growth of the 1980s, and in particular in the growth of part-time jobs in the service sector. The heavy load of paid and unpaid work carried by these women, often in the absence of adequate support services, requires the urgent attention of government.

For many NESB women, however, unemployment has been the major new form that their incorporation into the labour force has taken in the

1980s. In this report the very high unemployment rates of some groups of NESB women are documented. Both qualitative and quantitative data indicate the continuing occupational and industrial vulnerability of NESB women in the current recession, and in the context of ongoing economic restructuring. Processes of workplace reform in Australia, some of which were mentioned in the Introduction, place major new demands on the workforce.

> **Workers are expected to become articulate, semi-autonomous team members capable of accessing formal accredited training programs, acquiring a variety of skills, and actively participating in a range of consultative mechanisms to analyse their skills, redesign their jobs and establish their training needs (Mawer, 1991:8).**

Given the historic existence of barriers that have tended to exclude NESB women from jobs where these skills could be acquired, and from training and English language learning generally, it is clear that NESB women will not automatically be on equal footing vis a vis other workers in the workplaces of the future. Rather, government should consider the creation of support structures to ensure that NESB women are not further marginalised within the economy as micro-economic reforms are put in place. The future needs of NESB women retrenched from industry, in the context of the 1990s labour market, also warrants further examination.

This report has suggested that a likely reason for the declining labour force particpation rates of NESB women since 1986 is increasing hidden unemployment as well as hidden employment of a casual and poorly paid type. More work needs to be done to uncover the extent of dual labour markets (core and periphery) in certain industries, as well as alternative forms of employment that would allow greater benefits for the workers.

This report has suggested the different forms of research data available (quantitative and qualitative) can be fruitfully integrated to create a picture of NESB women's labour force experience that can both generalise with some certainty across the country *and* relate to the lived experience of NESB women themselves. It is important that this type of analysis is continued to explore some of the questions raised in further detail.

# APPENDICES

**Appendix A** : The Commonwealth - State Council on NESB Women's Issues

**Appendix B**: Recording ethnicity data

**Appendix C**: Cross-classified tables from the 1986 Census

**Appendix D**: Cross-classified tables from the labour force suveys

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**Appendix F**: Rural women in North-West Victoria - fruit pickers

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## APPENDIX A: THE COMMONWEALTH-STATE COUNCIL ON NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND WOMEN'S ISSUES

### Members of the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues

#### *Community representatives*

| | |
|---|---|
| Aziza Halim | New South Wales |
| Helen Chan | Victoria |
| *Ewa Drew | Queensland |
| Tran My-Van | South Australia |
| Shalima Farida | Western Australia |
| Desiree Hathaway | Northern Territory |
| *Vasiliki Nihas | Australian Capital Territory |
| Phahat Thaow | Tasmania |

#### *State/Territory government representatives*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Sarina Marchi/Rosa Droescher | NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission |
| Anna Fratta | Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission |
| *Irene Ciurak | Queensland Bureau of Ethnic Affairs |
| Sophie Rose | SA Dept. of Premier and Cabinet |
| Paula Cristoffanini | WA Office of Multicultural Interests |
| Jenny Medwell | NT Office of Ethnic Affairs |
| Tania Poulos | Australian Capital Territory |
| Zanette Ryan | Tasmania Office of the Status of Women |

#### *Commonwealth government representatives*

| | |
|---|---|
| Helen L'Orange | Office of the Status of Women |
| Sema Varova | Office of Multicultural Affairs |
| Ann Smith | Department of Immigration, Ethnic Affairs and Local Government |

* These women formed the Steering Committee which oversighted the writing of this report.

## Terms of Reference of the Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues

1. To provide a Commonwealth-State mechanism for the co-ordination and development of policies to meet the particular needs of NESB women in Australia.

2. To promote equitable access to government services by NESB women and more effective services and structures through identifying particular barriers and other problems and proposing strategies.

3. To advise Commonwealth, State and Territory governments on the concerns and needs of NESB women, through the identification of specific priorities and the provision of reports on how such priorities should be effectively addressed.

4. To undertake or promote consultation and research relevant to the above objectives.

5. To promote co-operation between all levels of government and with non-government bodies relevant to the above objectives.

6. To report annually:

   * to the Prime Minister through the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women.

   * to the Conference of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs through the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

# APPENDIX B: RECORDING ETHNICITY DATA

There are a number of ways of approaching the recording of ethnicity data, that is data on birthplace, language and level of English language competence. Each variable will be dealt with in turn.

**Birthplace data**

The form that is used can require the person filling it in to write out the birthplace in full; or transcribe a code from an attached list; or the form can have a complete list on it with associated boxes which are ticked, or a shortened list of birthplaces with boxes to tick; or a shortened list with boxes to tick and one or more composite categories which require, in addition to the tick, a written description of the birthplace alongside.

The costs and benefits of such an approach are discussed below. This is in order to examine how the data collection and processing environments have changed markedly over the past twenty years, to the extent that practices and procedures used in the past are no longer appropriate.

1. ***Writing out the birthplace in full***
   This is perhaps the most straightforward approach, requiring little space on the form and little effort on the part of the person filling it in. It does however require some extra effort in writing it out than some of the other methods and more effort in either precoding for data input or transcribing into a database and recoding for storage. The error rate in the recording stage is, however, likely to be quite low, and in most cases recoverable, and avoids many of the potential conflicts over recording discussed below.

2. ***Transcribe a code from an attached list***
   This approach reduces the amount of writing that the person filling the form in has to do. It is however not practical to have the client fill it in for two reasons. The first is that each form would require a complete set of codes which is likely to take at least an A4 sheet of paper, for each client, or a more cumbersome method of distribution and collection of code sheets for but one of what may be many questions on the form. The second is that there is likely to be a degree of error with transcription. The fewer cases of transcription a person does the higher the overall error rate is likely to be. In the case of a self-administered form, each person is filling in only one form. In the case of counter staff filling in the form, there may well still be a large number of people across an organisation

filling in the transcription. Once the allocation has been done there is little chance to check for quality.

3. ***A complete list with associated boxes which are ticked***
This option can reduce the error rate considerably and is the standard method for data collection for variables that have a limited number of possible values. In the case of birthplace, language and ancestry there are not a limited number of values. The question of shortening the list is dealt with below. The problem with using the full list for birthplace is that it would require each form to have a whole page of options, only one of which may be ticked. This is more expensive both in terms of paper and in terms of data entry time.

4. ***A shortened list of birthplaces with boxes to tick***
Whilst this may get around the problem of excess paper production, it still requires more space on the form than a single entry and raises the question of which birthplaces should be recognised and which ones should be accumulated into a single, or one of several, residual categories. Such decisions may vary from time to time and from place to place.

5. ***A shortened list with boxes to tick and one or more composite categories which require, in addition to the tick, a written description of the birthplace alongside.***
This copes with the 'loss of data' in the previous example but still has some complications regarding standardisation. This has been addressed in the database system designed by the Centre for Multicultural Studies at the University of Wollongong for use by migrant welfare workers. In this system, the individual site can customise a small number of additional 'boxes' which cover groups that they frequently service, but which are not numerically important nationally.

Whilst there are arguments for using each one of the approaches in particular cases, the fundamental issue seems to be: once you lose the opportunity to record there is no way you can recreate it.

It seems that the basic argument should be that the information should be collected at the fullest possible level, and with priority given to getting the collection right. Thus anything which interferes with the function being carried out at the time the data is being collected should be avoided. This will only lead to reluctance to comply accurately.

Once the information is collected, the process of coding to a suitable form to be stored is relatively straightforward. The question of the amount of effort required is relevant.

## Language data

### *Measures of language spoken*

Over the years there have been a variety of approaches to the recording of language. In 1976 the census question was:

> Q. 19 For each person, tick boxes to show all languages regularly used. Include all languages regularly used whether at home, at work or when shopping.

English and a few languages were listed separately, with a box labelled 'Other' for other languages. Only Italian, German and Greek were precoded, reflecting the assumptions at that time.

There was some concern that the data collected from this question was inflated to the extent that some people who were learning languages at school or university were recording all their languages spoken, although they could not be regarded in the normal sense as bring speakers of their studied language.

No language question was asked in 1981, and in 1986, the question was:

> Does the person speak a language other than English at home?

in order to avoid the problem described above. In 1991, the question was the same.

The issue in service delivery in whether there is any impediment to communication between the provider and client. It has been argued in the past that, properly collected, a combination of language spoken and English language competence is the appropriate combination of variables to ascertain this.

Unfortunately attempts to have this information collected have been hindered by the problems raised concerning the measurement of language competence.

### *Measures of language competence*

In the 1986 Census, the options for people who speak a language other than English at home were:

Speaks English: Very well
Well
Not well
Not at all

It should be noted that questions about the level of competence in languages *other* than English have never been asked, although literacy in such languages is also an issue of some importance for service provision.

As the census is a self-administered questionnaire, this is a subjective measure. Because the divisions between the categories are not clearly defined, it is often found to be useful to work with an aggregation of the first two as 'well' and the the last two as 'poorly'. Linguists have expressed doubts about such classifications, but this provides an excellent example of how imperfect data can still be useful.

Other measures used in specific service delivery situations include data in response to the following question:

> Is this person likely to need an interpreter at any stage of their dealings with this organisation? If so, in what languages should these services be provided?

# APPENDIX C: CROSS-CLASSIFIED TABLES FROM THE 1986 CENSUS

For more detail on the availability of these tables, please refer to the ABS **Catalogue of Cross-Classified tables** (Catalogue number 2175.0).

Tables with "CX" as a prefix relate to people by their actual location on census night. Tables with "UX" as a prefix relate to people who were in their place of residence on census night.

## 1. STANDARD TABLES

| TABLE | DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES |
|---|---|
| CX0017 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS |
| CX0042 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY OCCUPATION BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| CX0043 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| CX0049 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY OCCUPATION BY MARITAL STATUS |
| CX0058 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY INDUSTRY BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| CX0059 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY INDUSTRY BY OCCUPATION |
| CX0060 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY OCCUPATION BY HOURS WORKED |
| CX0204 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY INDUSTRY BY WHETHER WORKED AT HOME |
| UX0015 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| UX0019 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY OCCUPATION BY MARITAL STATUS |

## 2. SPECIAL TABLES

| TABLE | DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES |
|---|---|
| CX3055 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY ENGLISH COMPETENCE |
| CX0504 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY INTERNAL MIGRATION INDICATOR |

| | |
|---|---|
| CX0520 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY ENGLISH COMPETENCE BY QUALIFICATIONS |
| UX0501 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE BY MARITAL STATUS BY ABORIGINAL ORIGIN |
| UX0506 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY QUALIFICATIONS BY INTERNAL MIGRATION INDICATOR BY USUAL RESIDENCE 1981 |
| UX0507 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY QUALIFICATIONS BY INTERNAL MIGRATION INDICATOR BY USUAL RESIDENCE 1985 |
| UX0510 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY INDUSTRY BY OCCUPATION |

## APPENDIX D: CROSS-CLASSIFIED TABLES FROM THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEYS

| TABLE | DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES |
|---|---|
| **ALL NON-INSTITUTIONALISED PERSONS 15+** | |
| ANI1 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| ANI2 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS |
| ANI3 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| ANI3A | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| ANI4 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| ANI5 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS |
| ANI6 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS BY AGE |
| **ALL EMPLOYED PERSONS** | |
| E6 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY FULL-TIME/PART-TIME BY AGE |
| E23 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY INDUSTRY BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| E24 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY OCCUPATION BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| **ALL UNEMPLOYED PERSONS** | |
| UE3 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME/PART-TIME BY MARITAL STATUS BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| UE8 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| UE10 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY DURATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY AGE |
| UE12 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY OTHERS |
| UE17 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY WHETHER STOOD DOWN BY WHETHER LOOKING FOR FIRST JOB |
| UE17A | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE BY WHETHER STOOD DOWN BY WHETHER LOOKING FOR FIRST JOB |
| UE18 | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY PREVIOUS OCCUPATION BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |
| UE18A | BIRTHPLACE BY SEX BY PREVIOUS OCCUPATION BY PERIOD OF RESIDENCE |

# APPENDIX E: LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS

Longitudinal surveys, where a group of individuals or families are tracked over a considerable period of time provide a valuable way of assessing the changing labour force experience of groups of NESB women. The problem is that they can be extremely expensive to conduct and require an ongoing commitment to the continued collection of the information. Once the continuity has been lost, it is almost impossible to pick it up again. It is therefore important to make use of those surveys which are in place and to encourage those which are being considered.

In the course of the research for this project, two particularly suitable longitudinal surveys have been identified. One is already in place whilst the other is currently being piloted.

### *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia*

The Bureau of Immigration Research has initiated a Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA). This study will provide a sampling frame of considerable size through which to track individual migrant units over time. This is probably the single most important development in this area to have occurred in the past decade. It will provide a data base that can be used to address the sorts of questions with which this paper is concerned.

It is proposed that this be used as one important tool in the analysis of particular issues. By simultaneously including a set of questions that correspond to those that are being asked by the ABS in their current supplementary survey, the researchers will be able to match the global information with sufficient detail about much smaller immigrant groups. This applies especially to the recently arrived.

The main issues which the Bureau's questionnaire seeks to address are:

1. Evaluation and assessment of the effectiveness of the immigration selection process.

2. Evaluation of the effectiveness of DILGEA and other government services in assisting the post arrival process of settler adjustment.

3. The settlement process of migrants. How do they adjust to the labour market, the housing market and society generally? What

> institutional, contextual and individual factors appear to be associated with successful adjustment?
>
> 4. Assessment of the impact of immigration on the Australian society and economy. What are the costs and benefits? How do they vary between immigrant groups, regions, etc? (BIR, 1991:1)

The current proposal is for a pilot survey to be conducted with around 400 households, some 270 in New South Wales and 130 in South Australia.

The suggestion is that the final sample size will be of the order of 2,000 principal applicants. Since principal applicants make up just under a half of the people who migrate, the sample of 2,000 will probably cover some 4,000 people. This figure will produce a sampling fraction some six times larger than that in the Labour Force Survey and thus will provide information on many of the groups that are not reliably covered by the Labour Force Survey.

### *The Youth in Transition Project*

The Youth in Transition project is carried out by the Australian Council for Educational Research. It began in 1978 with a sample of people born in 1960-61 and contact has been maintained every year since. Three other cohorts, those born in 1965, 1970 and 1975, have been brought into the study and a range of reports have been produced from the information collected. In all there are some 12,000 people in the sample and although not all of them are surveyed for each project, this study represents an excellent base to follow through particular issues, especially relating to the question of the Australian born children of immigrants.

Even though the numbers of immigrant women or their children covered in this survey is not as large as would be necessary to derive meaningful estimates for small birthplace groups, it does appear to be a source from which to examine a range of hypotheses about the labour market experience of NESB women and develop new hypotheses to test against other data sets.

# APPENDIX F: RURAL WOMEN IN NORTH WEST VICTORIA - FRUIT PICKERS

This appendix provides an illustration of the way in which the existing large-scale data sources can be used to illuminate a little-known population or area. The subject is NESB women fruit pickers in north western Victoria. This is essentially a methodological demonstration exercise. Equivalent exercises could be done on a wide range of other groups being considered.

The major source used is the 1986 Census. All the results discussed are taken from the twenty-one page data, with the exception of the comments about collector's districts which have been taken from the seven-page data. The twenty-one page data here has been based on Local Government Areas. It should be remembered that this data can be even more localised down to the level of an aggregation of collection districts that total at least 1,000 people.

There are many difficulties associated with using this source for this particular purpose. These include, the inability to match the geographic area under consideration with the focus of the issue, the inability to isolate the particular category of 'fruit-picker', and the issue that fruit picking is a seasonal, and in some cases migratory, job and at the time the Census was taken (the end of June) many fruit pickers would not have been working as fruit pickers.

Initially a profile was constructed of the areas immediately around Mildura and Robinvale. The area considered took in the four Local Government Areas of Mildura (city and shire) and Swan Hill (city and shire). Relevant tables are shown at the end of this appendix.

The following gives the broad profile of the area at the time of the 1986 Census:

- Total population was just under 59,000, of whom over 9 per cent were born overseas.
- The proportion of the population who were born overseas or had a parent born overseas was over a quarter.
- Two thirds of those born overseas came from a NES background
- Only 6 per cent of those born overseas had arrived in the previous five years

- There were almost 150 people speaking a language other than English for every 100 people born in a NES country.
- Nearly 2 per cent of the total population (991 people) spoke English poorly.

### *Italian and Greek born in the area*

The largest single birthplace group was those born in Italy, nearly 30 per cent of all overseas born, and almost 3 per cent of the total population. There were over 180 people speaking Italian for every 100 born in Italy, a similar ratio for those born in Greece and speaking Greek. Italian speakers represented over 55 per cent of all those speaking a language other than English at home. Less than 0.5 per cent of the Italian born and none of the Greek born had arrived in the five years leading up to the 1986 Census.

### *Differences between the LGAs - Swan Hill and Mildura*

Within the four local government areas the figures for overseas born ranged from 5.7 per cent in the city of Swan Hill to 11.0 in the shire of Mildura. The figures for first and second generation ranged from 18.4 to 29 per cent in the same two areas. The Italian born were the largest group in the two shires with 39.2 percent of the overseas born in Swan Hill and 36.2 percent in Mildura, whereas those born in England were the largest group in the two cities, 30.4 per cent in Swan Hill and 25.9 per cent in Mildura.

The proportion speaking English poorly ranged from 1.0 to 2.4 percent.

At the collection district level there are even greater concentrations. Three of the collector districts in Mildura shire had between 17 and 22 per cent overseas born, whilst three in Swan Hill Shire had over 16 per cent.

Almost all of the 373 Muslims in the area were in the two Mildura areas, whilst of the Orthodox population, almost 800 were spread over three of the councils, but not in the city of Swan Hill.

### *Women's employment in agriculture*

In the area made up of Mildura city and shire and the shire of Swan Hill 5380 people were employed in agriculture, just under a third of them female. This is a lower proportion than for the workforce in total.

Fifty-five per cent of the women in agriculture were in the 35-54 age group compared with 42 per cent of the men. Very few young women were in agriculture. Less than 2 per cent of women in agriculture were under twenty, compared with nearly 5 per cent of men and figures of 7.8 percent for men overall and 9.8 percent of females. The representation of women over the age of 55 in agriculture was almost twice that in the workforce as a whole.

### *Occupational make-up of the agricultural population*

Seventy-two percent of people in agriculture were classified as managers or administrators, compared with a figure of just over a quarter for the workforce as a whole. In fact three-quarters of all managers or administrators in the district were in agriculture.

Sixteen per cent of all managers or administrators were born in Southern Europe, nearly two and a half times their representation in the workforce as a whole. A similar ratio was found amongst those born in the Middle East, although there were only forty people in this category. Those born in Southern Europe accounted for only 6.2 percent of the employed labour force.

Although the figures were quite small, the group most disproportionately represented in the labourer category comprised those born in Other Oceania, that is, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.

### *The Turkish community in North West Victoria*

The data has given a considerable amount of detail about the Italian and Greek communities, sometimes derived using the classification 'birthplace', sometimes using 'language spoken' and sometimes through use of the aggregate category of 'Southern Europeans'. To continue this exercise and look for groups whose language is not separately identified, the example of the Turkish community is explored.

Of the group of just over 320 people from the Middle East, 80 per cent were Turkish born.

The group as a whole was somewhat younger than the overall population, with a quarter in the 15-24 age group and rather more than a half in the 25-54 age group. The corresponding figures for all overseas born were less than ten per cent in the 15-24 age group and a half of the group in the 25-54 age group.

Less than 20 per cent were in the workforce, only 64 out of the whole group.
By contrast, over a half of those born in Southern Europe were in the workforce. This was partly due to the group being older.

In the whole of Victoria outside of Melbourne there were 1,652 people born in the Middle East. Thus the proportion in the area under discussion here represented about 20 per cent of the rural Middle Eastern population. It also represented about 40 per cent of the rural population born in Turkey.

### *Distribution of the Turkish born across Council areas in Victoria outside the Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD)*

To put this in context of the whole Turkish community in Victoria, there were 12,000 Turkish born people counted in Victoria only 688 of whom lived outside the MSD.

Of that 688 only five council areas had more than 20 Turkish born people and only 35 of the 154 councils had any at all. The five between them accounted for over 80 per cent of all the Turkish born. One area was on the fringes of Melbourne, Corio shire, the other four were Mildura Shire and City and two councils in the area of Shepparton, Shepparton and Rodney.

Only in the two Mildura councils and in Rodney was the number of Turkish born greater than 0.5 per cent of the population, a figure exceeded in thirteen of the Melbourne councils.

*Thus a great deal of the information about people born in Turkey, or those speaking Turkish, in non-metropolitan Victoria, in fact relates to those people living in the areas around Mildura and Shepparton. At the level of Melbourne/Rest of Victoria there is much more statistical detail.*

### *Agricultural women in the North Western Victoria Statistical Division*

The next level up above the Local Government Area is the Statistical Division. The Mildura/Swan Hill area comes into one called North Western Victoria. This is given a geographic code 4 by the ABS and covers such tables as CX0056, full industry by broad birthplace regions by hours worked.

There are twenty-seven different categories under agriculture from which figures such as those discussed below can be derived.

- 18,000 women in agriculture, 24 per cent of the total Victorian figure,
- 2,000 women born in Southern Europe in the region, 930 in agriculture, 25 per cent of the Southern Europe born women working in agriculture in Victoria.

The figures for the Middle East born women in North Western Victoria show that almost 40 per cent of them work in agriculture, compared with 0.7 per cent state-wide.

The largest group of women generally, some 3,700 , representing 20 per cent of the total, were in 'sheep - cereal grains', with a further 3,000 in 'cereal grains' and 2,200 in 'sheep' only. Between them, these categories accounted for a half of the women in agriculture. Of the figure of almost 1,000 women born in Southern Europe or the Middle East, only 5 were in these categories.

On the other hand the next largest group was 'grapes', with 12 per cent of the total, just over 2,100 women. 38 per cent of all women born in the Middle East were in this category and 59 per cent of women born in Southern Europe were in this category. (It must be emphasised again that this is only dealing with 'birthplace', many of the daughters of these women will have been born in Australia).

A similar pattern exists in 'orchard fruits' with 35 per cent of the Middle East born, 19 per cent of the Southern Europe born and 6 per cent of the remainder working in this area. Over 80 per cent of each of the two groups working in some part of the 'fruit' industry, compared with a figure of 16 per cent for the rest of the female workforce in agriculture.

Thirty-nine per cent of women born in Southern Europe in the whole of North Western Victoria are working in the 'fruit' industry, 32 per cent of those born in the Middle East and only 2.8 per cent of the remainder.

Not all these women are 'fruit pickers'. All that has been recorded is that they are working in the 'fruit' industry. Nor would all the women who work in the industry at some time during the year have been working in June. Nevertheless these figures have given some idea of what is available from published sources without having to obtain special tabulations. But with the information from these tables, quite specific reclassifications could be used if there was a need to examine this sector of the labour force in more detail.

What is important here is to understand the way in which information on particular groups can be built up across a range levels in the geographic hierarchy without relying on complex statistical techniques. The people who could use this data fall into two groups, those who work on the ground and who wish to demonstrate with figures what they know to be happening from their own experience and those who are trying to interpret what they are being told about the situation, compare with other areas and see the extent to which a phenomenon is reflected in the figures.

### *Ethnicity statistics for North Western Victoria and Mildura city and shire*

The following set of pages give a standard single page summary of ethnicity related statistics from the twenty-one page format output from the 1986 Census for two of the LGAs discussed above and for the North Western Victoria Statistical Division. They are based on a standard A4 page briefing note that can be generated for any area for which twenty-one page data is available.

## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM - 1986

**Area: Mildura (C)**

Customised Table 1

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 18382 | OSB as a % of total | 9.7 |
| Overseas born | 1781 | % 1st or 2nd Generation | 25.5 |
| NES born | 1024 | NESB as a % of OSB | 57.5 |
| Arrived since 1981 | 153 | % of OSB arr. since 1981 | 8.6 |

| Birthplace Groups | | % OSB |
|---|---|---|
| England | 461 | 25.9 |
| Italy | 290 | 16.3 |
| Greece | 123 | 6.9 |
| New Zealand | 121 | 6.8 |
| Turkey | 103 | 5.8 |
| Yugoslavia | 95 | 5.3 |
| Scotland | 91 | 5.1 |
| Germany | 68 | 3.8 |
| Netherlands | 42 | 2.4 |
| Poland | 39 | 2.2 |
| Hungary | 25 | 1.4 |
| USA | 25 | 1.4 |
| Cyprus | 21 | 1.2 |
| Wales | 21 | 1.2 |
| Malaysia | 17 | 1.0 |
| Ireland (R) | 17 | 1.0 |
| Canada | 16 | 0.9 |
| Sri Lanka | 12 | 0.7 |
| India | 11 | 0.6 |
| Northern Ireland | 11 | 0.6 |
| China | 11 | 0.6 |
| Austria | 10 | 0.6 |
| South Africa (R) | 10 | 0.6 |
| Malta | 9 | 0.5 |
| USSR nei | 9 | 0.5 |
| Hong Kong | 8 | 0.4 |
| France | 7 | 0.4 |
| Latvia | 6 | 0.3 |
| Philippines | 4 | 0.2 |
| Lebanon | 4 | 0.2 |
| Czechoslovakia | 4 | 0.2 |
| Egypt | 4 | 0.2 |
| Singapore | 4 | 0.2 |
| Spain | 4 | 0.2 |
| Indonesia | 4 | 0.2 |
| Portugal | 0 | 0.0 |
| Vietnam | 0 | 0.0 |
| Chile | 0 | 0.0 |
| Papua New Guinea | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 74 | 4.2 |

Parents of the Australian Born

| | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| Both OSB | 1424 | 8.6 |
| One OSB | 1487 | 9.0 |
| Both Aust born | 13690 | 82.5 |

| Languages Spoken at Home | | % |
|---|---|---|
| Italian | 479 | 36.2 |
| Greek | 244 | 18.4 |
| German | 48 | 3.6 |
| Polish | 34 | 2.6 |
| Serbian, Croatian | 29 | 2.2 |
| Chinese | 26 | 2.0 |
| Dutch | 26 | 2.0 |
| French | 15 | 1.1 |
| Arabic/Lebanese | 4 | 0.3 |
| Maltese | 2 | 0.2 |
| Spanish | 2 | 0.2 |
| Vietnamese | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 340 | 25.7 |
| Not Stated | 76 | 5.7 |
| Total | 1325 | 100.0 |

English Language Competence

| Speaks | | % |
|---|---|---|
| English poorly | 265 | 1.6 |
| English well | 1020 | 6.0 |
| only English | 15400 | 90.2 |
| Total (inc ns) | 17069 | (age 5+) |

Age of the Overseas Born

| Age | OSB | Total | % OSB |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-14 | 82 | 4076 | 2.0 |
| 15-24 | 140 | 3094 | 4.5 |
| 25-54 | 856 | 6788 | 12.6 |
| 55-64 | 289 | 1842 | 15.7 |
| 65+ | 409 | 2583 | 15.8 |
| Total | 1776 | 18383 | 9.7 |

(includes rounding errors)

| Religion | | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Catholic | 4227 | 23.0 |
| Anglican | 4018 | 21.9 |
| Orthodox | 263 | 1.4 |
| Oriental Christian | 4 | 0.0 |
| Muslim | 140 | 0.8 |
| Jewish | 15 | 0.1 |
| Buddhist | 13 | 0.1 |
| Hindu | 18 | 0.1 |
| Oth Non-Christian | 20 | 0.1 |

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## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM - 1986

Area: Mildura (C) Customised table 2

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Total Population* | 18382 | *OSB as a % of total* | 9.7 |
| *Overseas born* | 1781 | *% 1st or 2nd Generation* | 25.5 |
| *NES born* | 1024 | *NESB as a % of OSB* | 57.5 |
| *Arrived since 1981* | 153 | *% of OSB arr. since 1981* | 8.6 |

## Recently Arrived

| | Since 1981 | Before 1981 | Not Stated | Total | % Since 1981 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *South Africa (R)* | 6 | 4 | 0 | 10 | 60.0 |
| *Other* | 30 | 44 | 0 | 74 | 40.5 |
| *USA* | 8 | 15 | 2 | 25 | 32.0 |
| *New Zealand* | 33 | 84 | 4 | 121 | 27.3 |
| *Wales* | 5 | 16 | 0 | 21 | 23.8 |
| *Germany* | 9 | 55 | 4 | 68 | 13.2 |
| *Total O'seas Born* | 153 | 1564 | 64 | 1781 | 8.6 |
| *England* | 29 | 418 | 14 | 461 | 6.3 |
| *Sri Lanka* | 4 | 8 | 0 | 12 | RSR |
| *Indonesia* | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | RSR |
| *Ireland (Rep)* | 4 | 13 | 0 | 17 | RSR |
| *Malaysia* | 4 | 13 | 0 | 17 | RSR |
| *Italy* | 2 | 277 | 11 | 290 | RSR |
| *China* | 2 | 9 | 0 | 11 | RSR |
| *Philippines* | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | RSR |
| *Turkey* | 3 | 100 | 0 | 103 | RSR |
| *Scotland* | 2 | 83 | 6 | 91 | RSR |
| *Hong Kong* | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 | RSR |
| *Canada* | 4 | 10 | 2 | 16 | RSR |
| *Malta* | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| *Hungary* | 0 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 0 |
| *Spain* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *Netherlands* | 0 | 38 | 4 | 42 | 0 |
| *Greece* | 0 | 118 | 5 | 123 | 0 |
| *Northern Ireland* | 0 | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| *France* | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| *Latvia* | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| *Egypt* | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| *Poland* | 0 | 36 | 3 | 39 | 0 |
| *Czechoslovakia* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *India* | 0 | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| *Austria* | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| *USSR nei* | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| *Cyprus* | 0 | 19 | 2 | 21 | 0 |
| *Lebanon* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *Singapore* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *Yugoslavia* | 0 | 90 | 5 | 95 | 0 |
| *Portugal* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| *Vietnam* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| *Papua New Guinea* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| *Chile* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

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## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM - 1986

**Area: Mildura (S)**

Customised Table 1

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 19373 | OSB as a % of total | 11.0 |
| Overseas born | 2137 | % 1st or 2nd Generation | 29.0 |
| NES born | 1549 | NESB as a % of OSB | 72.5 |
| Arrived since 1981 | 106 | % of OSB arr. since 1981 | 5.0 |

| Birthplace Groups | | % OSB |
|---|---|---|
| Italy | 773 | 36.2 |
| England | 335 | 15.7 |
| Yugoslavia | 179 | 8.4 |
| Turkey | 154 | 7.2 |
| Greece | 127 | 5.9 |
| New Zealand | 108 | 5.1 |
| Scotland | 74 | 3.5 |
| Germany | 68 | 3.2 |
| Netherlands | 53 | 2.5 |
| Hungary | 48 | 2.2 |
| Wales | 23 | 1.1 |
| Cyprus | 20 | 0.9 |
| USA | 18 | 0.8 |
| Northern Ireland | 14 | 0.7 |
| Ireland (R) | 12 | 0.6 |
| Austria | 11 | 0.5 |
| Poland | 9 | 0.4 |
| USSR nei | 8 | 0.4 |
| India | 7 | 0.3 |
| Czechoslovakia | 7 | 0.3 |
| Canada | 7 | 0.3 |
| Papua New Guinea | 6 | 0.3 |
| Indonesia | 4 | 0.2 |
| Sri Lanka | 4 | 0.2 |
| South Africa (R) | 4 | 0.2 |
| Malta | 4 | 0.2 |
| Philippines | 3 | 0.1 |
| Malaysia | 2 | 0.1 |
| China | 2 | 0.1 |
| Hong Kong | 0 | 0.0 |
| France | 0 | 0.0 |
| Egypt | 0 | 0.0 |
| Spain | 0 | 0.0 |
| Vietnam | 0 | 0.0 |
| Portugal | 0 | 0.0 |
| Latvia | 0 | 0.0 |
| Lebanon | 0 | 0.0 |
| Singapore | 0 | 0.0 |
| Chile | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 53 | 2.5 |

Parents of the Australian Born

| | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| Both OSB | 1875 | 10.9 |
| One OSB | 1598 | 9.3 |
| Both Aust born | 13763 | 79.9 |

| Languages Spoken at Home | | % |
|---|---|---|
| Italian | 1426 | 58.8 |
| Greek | 257 | 10.6 |
| Serbian, Croatian | 71 | 2.9 |
| German | 50 | 2.1 |
| Dutch | 30 | 1.2 |
| Polish | 13 | 0.5 |
| French | 9 | 0.4 |
| Arabic/Lebanese | 2 | 0.1 |
| Chinese | 2 | 0.1 |
| Maltese | 0 | 0.0 |
| Spanish | 0 | 0.0 |
| Vietnamese | 0 | 0.0 |
| Other | 468 | 19.3 |
| Not Stated | 98 | 4.0 |
| Total | 2426 | 100.0 |

English Language Competence

| Speaks | | % |
|---|---|---|
| English poorly | 433 | 2.4 |
| English well | 1952 | 11.0 |
| only English | 15103 | 84.8 |
| Total (inc ns) | 17802 | (age 5+) |

Age of the Overseas Born

| Age | OSB | Total | % OSB |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-14 | 58 | 4908 | 1.2 |
| 15-24 | 169 | 3134 | 5.4 |
| 25-54 | 1219 | 7788 | 15.7 |
| 55-64 | 377 | 1876 | 20.1 |
| 65+ | 318 | 1674 | 19.0 |
| Total | 2141 | 19380 | 11.0 |

(includes rounding errors)

| Religion | | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Catholic | 4830 | 24.9 |
| Anglican | 3867 | 20.0 |
| Orthodox | 329 | 1.7 |
| Oriental Christian | 2 | 0.0 |
| Muslim | 215 | 1.1 |
| Jewish | 10 | 0.1 |
| Buddhist | 10 | 0.1 |
| Hindu | 5 | 0.0 |
| Oth Non-Christian | 8 | 0.0 |

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Data Source: ABS 1986 Census

## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM - 1986

**Area: Mildura (S)** Customised table 2

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total Population | 19373 | OSB as a % of total | 11.0 |
| Overseas born | 2137 | % 1st or 2nd Generation | 29.0 |
| NES born | 1549 | NESB as a % of OSB | 72.5 |
| Arrived since 1981 | 106 | % of OSB arr. since 1981 | 5.0 |

## Recently Arrived

| | Since 1981 | Before 1981 | Not Stated | Total | % Since 1981 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 8 | 10 | 0 | 18 | 44.4 |
| Other | 21 | 27 | 5 | 53 | 39.6 |
| New Zealand | 30 | 74 | 4 | 108 | 27.8 |
| Turkey | 13 | 136 | 5 | 154 | 8.4 |
| Total O'seas Born | 106 | 1957 | 74 | 2137 | 5.0 |
| England | 16 | 307 | 12 | 335 | 4.8 |
| Italy | 5 | 739 | 29 | 773 | 0.6 |
| Philippines | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | RSR |
| Northern Ireland | 4 | 10 | 0 | 14 | RSR |
| Germany | 4 | 64 | 0 | 68 | RSR |
| South Africa (R) | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | RSR |
| Malta | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Poland | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Greece | 0 | 123 | 4 | 127 | 0 |
| USSR nei | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Indonesia | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Papua New Guinea | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| Canada | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| China | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Wales | 0 | 23 | 0 | 23 | 0 |
| Hungary | 0 | 46 | 2 | 48 | 0 |
| Austria | 0 | 11 | 0 | 11 | 0 |
| India | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Sri Lanka | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Scotland | 0 | 72 | 2 | 74 | 0 |
| Yugoslavia | 0 | 172 | 7 | 179 | 0 |
| Cyprus | 0 | 18 | 2 | 20 | 0 |
| Netherlands | 0 | 51 | 2 | 53 | 0 |
| Malaysia | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Ireland (Rep) | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 0 |
| Czechoslovakia | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 |
| Portugal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Vietnam | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Lebanon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Singapore | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Latvia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| France | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Egypt | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Spain | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Chile | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Hong Kong | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

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## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM – 1986

### Area: North West Victoria

Customised Table 1

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Total Population* | 58648 | *OSB as a % of total* | 9.2 |
| *Overseas born* | 5424 | *% 1st or 2nd Generation* | 25.1 |
| *NES born* | 3532 | *NESB as a % of OSB* | 65.1 |
| *Arrived since 1981* | 348 | *% of OSB arr. since 1981* | 6.4 |

| Birthplace Groups | | % OSB |
|---|---|---|
| *Italy* | 1601 | 29.5 |
| *England* | 1151 | 21.2 |
| *Greece* | 366 | 6.7 |
| *Yugoslavia* | 319 | 5.9 |
| *New Zealand* | 300 | 5.5 |
| *Turkey* | 264 | 4.9 |
| *Scotland* | 235 | 4.3 |
| *Germany* | 170 | 3.1 |
| *Netherlands* | 142 | 2.6 |
| *Hungary* | 78 | 1.4 |
| *USA* | 59 | 1.1 |
| *Poland* | 57 | 1.1 |
| *Wales* | 55 | 1.0 |
| *Cyprus* | 53 | 1.0 |
| *Ireland (R)* | 40 | 0.7 |
| *Canada* | 32 | 0.6 |
| *Northern Ireland* | 32 | 0.6 |
| *France* | 28 | 0.5 |
| *Austria* | 27 | 0.5 |
| *Malta* | 26 | 0.5 |
| *India* | 25 | 0.5 |
| *South Africa (R)* | 20 | 0.4 |
| *Malaysia* | 19 | 0.4 |
| *USSR nei* | 19 | 0.4 |
| *Sri Lanka* | 18 | 0.3 |
| *Hong Kong* | 17 | 0.3 |
| *China* | 15 | 0.3 |
| *Czechoslovakia* | 15 | 0.3 |
| *Philippines* | 14 | 0.3 |
| *Latvia* | 10 | 0.2 |
| *Papua New Guinea* | 9 | 0.2 |
| *Indonesia* | 8 | 0.1 |
| *Singapore* | 6 | 0.1 |
| *Lebanon* | 6 | 0.1 |
| *Spain* | 4 | 0.1 |
| *Egypt* | 4 | 0.1 |
| *Vietnam* | 4 | 0.1 |
| *Chile* | 2 | 0.0 |
| *Portugal* | 0 | 0.0 |
| *Other* | 174 | 3.2 |

Parents of the Australian Born

| | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Both OSB* | 4736 | 8.9 |
| *One OSB* | 4535 | 8.5 |
| *Both Aust born* | 43953 | 82.6 |

| Languages Spoken at Home | | % |
|---|---|---|
| *Italian* | 2923 | 55.6 |
| *Greek* | 676 | 12.9 |
| *German* | 123 | 2.3 |
| *Serbian, Croatian* | 110 | 2.1 |
| *Dutch* | 83 | 1.6 |
| *Polish* | 55 | 1.0 |
| *Chinese* | 46 | 0.9 |
| *French* | 45 | 0.9 |
| *Maltese* | 9 | 0.2 |
| *Spanish* | 8 | 0.2 |
| *Arabic/Lebanese* | 6 | 0.1 |
| *Vietnamese* | 0 | 0.0 |
| *Other* | 947 | 18.0 |
| *Not Stated* | 223 | 4.2 |
| Total | 5254 | 100.0 |

English Language Competence

| Speaks | | % |
|---|---|---|
| *English poorly* | 991 | 1.8 |
| *English well* | 4152 | 7.7 |
| *only English* | 47716 | 88.4 |
| Total (inc ns) | 53950 | (age 5+) |

Age of the Overseas Born

| Age | OSB | Total | % OSB |
|---|---|---|---|
| *0-14* | 188 | 14415 | 1.3 |
| *15-24* | 419 | 9592 | 4.4 |
| *25-54* | 2869 | 22338 | 12.8 |
| *55-64* | 928 | 5785 | 16.0 |
| *65+* | 1018 | 6527 | 15.6 |
| Total | 5422 | 58657 | 9.2 |

*(includes rounding errors)*

| Religion | | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| *Catholic* | 14289 | 24.4 |
| *Anglican* | 12231 | 20.9 |
| *Orthodox* | 781 | 1.3 |
| *Oriental Christian* | 10 | 0.0 |
| *Muslim* | 373 | 0.6 |
| *Jewish* | 29 | 0.0 |
| *Buddhist* | 30 | 0.1 |
| *Hindu* | 29 | 0.0 |
| *Oth Non-Christian* | 30 | 0.1 |

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## CENSUS APPLICATIONS SMALL AREA SYSTEM - 1986

**Area: North West Victoria** Customised table 2

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Total Population* | 58648 | *OSB as a % of total* | 9.2 |
| *Overseas born* | 5424 | *% 1st or 2nd Generation* | 25.1 |
| *NES born* | 3532 | *NESB as a % of OSB* | 65.1 |
| *Arrived since 1981* | 348 | *% of OSB arr. since 1981* | 6.4 |

## Recently Arrived

| | Since 1981 | Before 1981 | Not Stated | Total | % Since 1981 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *South Africa (R)* | 10 | 10 | 0 | 20 | 50.0 |
| *Philippines* | 7 | 7 | 0 | 14 | 50.0 |
| *Hong Kong* | 8 | 9 | 0 | 17 | 47.1 |
| *Other* | 65 | 102 | 7 | 174 | 37.4 |
| *USA* | 22 | 35 | 2 | 59 | 37.3 |
| *Canada* | 9 | 21 | 2 | 32 | 28.1 |
| *New Zealand* | 76 | 214 | 10 | 300 | 25.3 |
| *Ireland (Rep)* | 6 | 34 | 0 | 40 | 15.0 |
| *Wales* | 7 | 48 | 0 | 55 | 12.7 |
| *Germany* | 19 | 142 | 9 | 170 | 11.2 |
| *Total O'seas Born* | 348 | 4890 | 186 | 5424 | 6.4 |
| *Turkey* | 16 | 243 | 5 | 264 | 6.1 |
| *England* | 65 | 1056 | 30 | 1151 | 5.6 |
| *Scotland* | 7 | 218 | 10 | 235 | 3.0 |
| *Italy* | 7 | 1529 | 65 | 1601 | 0.4 |
| *Malta* | 2 | 24 | 0 | 26 | RSR |
| *Singapore* | 2 | 4 | 0 | 6 | RSR |
| *Northern Ireland* | 4 | 26 | 2 | 32 | RSR |
| *Netherlands* | 2 | 134 | 6 | 142 | RSR |
| *Sri Lanka* | 4 | 14 | 0 | 18 | RSR |
| *China* | 4 | 11 | 0 | 15 | RSR |
| *Malaysia* | 4 | 15 | 0 | 19 | RSR |
| *Indonesia* | 2 | 6 | 0 | 8 | RSR |
| *Greece* | 0 | 353 | 13 | 366 | 0 |
| *Lebanon* | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 |
| *Egypt* | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 0 |
| *Hungary* | 0 | 76 | 2 | 78 | 0 |
| *Czechoslovakia* | 0 | 15 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| *India* | 0 | 25 | 0 | 25 | 0 |
| *USSR nei* | 0 | 19 | 0 | 19 | 0 |
| *Austria* | 0 | 27 | 0 | 27 | 0 |
| *Vietnam* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *Spain* | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| *Cyprus* | 0 | 47 | 6 | 53 | 0 |
| *Poland* | 0 | 54 | 3 | 57 | 0 |
| *Yugoslavia* | 0 | 307 | 12 | 319 | 0 |
| *France* | 0 | 28 | 0 | 28 | 0 |
| *Chile* | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| *Papua New Guinea* | 0 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| *Latvia* | 0 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| *Portugal* | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

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# APPENDIX G: BENCH-MARKING IMMIGRANT POPULATION ESTIMATES FROM THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY AND CENSUS UPDATES

Whenever there is a discussion of statistics that relates to immigrant groups, the question arises as to whether the sample or population base on which the calculations were based are accurate. Is the level of enumeration the same for all groups? In the case of samples, what is the probability that particular households get left out of the sample? In terms of procedure these issues are addressed in Appendix H. Here the results of the collections will be examined. The argument that follows uses information on those born in Vietnam. The patterns observed appear to apply to a range of birthplaces in Asia.

There are two sources of information that can be used for comparison of the size of birthplace groups in intercensal years. Each year the ABS releases "Estimated Resident Population by Country of Birth, Age and Sex, Australia" (ERP).

The first step is to take two sets of figures that purport to relate to the same period. The ERP figures, preliminary, for June 1989, give a total population over the age of 15 of some 13.1 million. The figures from the labour force survey in the same month give a total of 12.4 million persons over the age of fifteen in private dwellings who were not members of the permanent defence forces (of Australia or any other country) or overseas residents. In the source used, "Labour Force Status and other Characteristics of Families", the number is further reduced to 12.1 million when people whose family status was impossible to infer were excluded.

When the figures for the Australian born and overseas born, broken down into ESB and NESB, are compared from the two sources, the labour force survey NESB are more than 95 per cent of the ERP. By contrast, the labour force survey Australian born and the ESB are both around 92 per cent of the figures in the ERP. This difference probably reflects the different participation between the three groups in the defence forces.

What this exercise has done has been to establish the level of compatibility between the two sets of figures at the national level. The next stage is to use this ratio to look at particular birthplace groups.

The ERP figures, thus adjusted for underenumeration, residents overseas and non-residents counted, gave, for example, an estimate of 108 thousand Vietnamese born persons resident in Australia in June 1989. Of these some 91 thousand were over the age of fifteen.

The monthly labour force survey publications provide an estimate of the total civilian population over the age of fifteen, outside of institutions, who were born in Vietnam. This figure, for May 1989, was 74,000. This appears to be an underestimate of the size of the population.

Figures for eighteen months later, from the sample for November 1990, indicate that the group was 92,000. By contrast, the figures for total number of people born in Vietnam who arrived in Australia as settlers or long-term arrivals (less the departures) was 10,000 in the calendar year 1989. In the first six months of 1990 it was around 6,000. Thus the total number of Vietnamese born resident in Australia in mid 1990 could be estimated to be of the order of 119,000. Equivalent figures for May 1989 and November 1990 might have been 107,000 and 124,000. Applying the same percentages for the population over the age of fifteen, a first estimate of the estimated resident population over 15 at those two points in time would be 90,000 and 105,000. The figures derived from the surveys, 74,000 and 92,000 are both substantially lower but the latter figure is a higher percentage of the estimated resident adult population than the other.

Such a series of calculations is fraught with difficulties and needs to be carried through in greater detail, but if the figures here are sustained for a range of birthplace groups, and the early indications are that they are, then the conclusion might well be drawn that the surveys are moving towards selecting a more representative sample of such birthplace groups. That is to say that they are become increasingly reliable as methods of estimating parameters of the groups being referred to.

There are several possible explanations of such a trend if it is in fact occurring. In the first instance, it could be that the mechanisms whereby such people are being targeted by the survey process are improving. It could be that the people carrying out the survey are less likely, by whatever means, to miss households of particular migrant groups than they were. It could be that members of these groups are more prepared to cooperate in the collection process. It could be that their settlement patterns have changed to a degree that reduces the likelihood that, by chance, they are excluded from the sample. It could be that the marginal impact of their recent arrival on sample selection is also reduced.

Whatever the reasons for the changes, it appears that they reflect an improvement in the way in which the sample captures members of these groups. Thus, increasingly, there is reason for look for ways to use this data, while still being aware of its limitations.

## APPENDIX H: UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF NESB WOMEN IN THE LABOUR FORCE SURVEY

There have been criticisms in the past that people from NESB are underrepresented in the labour force surveys for a number of reasons. The two major assertions are that, one, the sampling frame discriminates against people from NESB and, two, the fieldwork procedures mitigate against contacting an appropriate proportion of NESB households.

Each of these will be dealt with here. The first is to examine the extent to which the sample frame reduces the probability of any particular NESB household from being contacted.

The table below gives the apparent sampling fractions of the various groups. In its information paper on sample design for the labour force survey, put out in 1987, the ABS set out the sampling fractions shown below.

| State/Territory | Fraction |
|---|---|
| New South Wales | 1 in 230 |
| Victoria | 1 in 230 |
| Queensland | 1 in 160 |
| South Australia | 1 in 115 |
| Western Australia | 1 in 115 |
| Tasmania | 1 in 70 |
| Northern Territory | 1 in 115 |
| Australian Capital Territory | 1 in 115 |

Overall this gives a sampling fraction of around 1 in 172.

The relevance of this differential sampling fraction from state to state is that because the concentration of NESB women is not uniform across states and territories, the apparent sampling fraction for them is different to the overall fraction.

By using a recent series of figures from the labour force survey, November 1990, and calculating from the estimates of population used in the results and the actual sample size that was used, it is possible to calculate an apparent fraction.

The survey appears to have contacted one in every 172 adults in the population but only one in every 175 immigrants. These figures are similar for both males and females. But within the migrant category there are larger differences. The best estimates are that one in 187 migrants from non-English speaking countries were contacted compared with one in 160 (for males) or 161 (for females) for those born in English speaking countries.

This is reflection of the overweighting of the sample outside the two most populous states which are also the ones with the highest concentration of people from non-English speaking birthplaces.

The question becomes whether this has any impact on the usefulness of the sample surveys for getting information on the characteristics of the group of NESB women.

### Apparent Sampling Fractions

**Males**

| Birthplace | Employed | Unemployed | NILF | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 170 | 164 | 173 | 170 |
| ESCs | 160 | 156 | 159 | 160 |
| NESCs | 189 | 188 | 183 | 187 |
| All OS born | 175 | 176 | 173 | 175 |
| All | 171 | 167 | 173 | 172 |

**Females**

| Birthplace | Employed | Unemployed | NILF | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 171 | 168 | 171 | 171 |
| ESCs | 162 | 156 | 161 | 161 |
| NESCs | 187 | 188 | 186 | 187 |
| All OS born | 174 | 174 | 176 | 175 |
| All | 172 | 170 | 173 | 172 |

### Percentage difference

**Males**

| Birthplace | Employed | Unemployed | NILF | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | -1 | -2 | 0 | -1 |
| ESCs | -6 | -7 | -8 | -7 |
| NESCs | 10 | 12 | 6 | 9 |
| All OS born | 2 | 5 | 0 | 2 |

**Females**

| Birthplace | Employed | Unemployed | NILF | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 0 | -1 | -1 | -1 |
| ESCs | -6 | -8 | -7 | -6 |
| NESCs | 9 | 11 | 8 | 9 |
| All OS born | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |

The conclusion that seems the most appropriate to draw from this analysis is that there is no substantial bias against NESB households in the sample frame used by the ABS in its monthly labour force survey. However, what bias there is does work against NESB households. This only becomes important in as much as it reduces the amount of information that will be released on immigrant groups and makes it more likely that particular estimates will be suppressed.

The second issue is that of coverage. Whilst the collection procedures are such that non-response rates are kept to an absolute minimum, there will still exist certain circumstances in which a selected household is not interviewed. The procedures followed by the ABS on contacting a person of non-English speaking background who is unable to communicate sufficiently well in English to allow the interview to go ahead, are to seek first another member of the household who can communicate sufficiently well and establish a time to contact them. Revisiting the household in the evening is the usual way to follow up such a situation. If this proves unsatisfactory then the preferred language is established and interpreting resources are called upon.

Although the procedures are essentially the same as those for the census, the level of language-related non-response rate is higher for the latter because of the fact that the workforce used in the census is less well trained than that which is employed in the labour force survey.

There will undoubtedly be cases where immigrants of non-English speaking background who should have been interviewed are not. Given the fact that households are supposed to stay in the sample for a total of eight months and immigrants, especially in the early stages of their residence, have higher rates of mobility, as a group they will tend to be more likely to be lost from the sample.

However, there is little evidence that the scale of this is of sufficient magnitude to warrant ignoring or rejecting the information from the survey. Moreover, the task of attempting to redraw the sample to make it better represent immigrant households would doubtless create further problems.

## APPENDIX I: CES REGISTRANTS IN REGIONS OF SYDNEY

The following appendix provides an example of the use of administrative records by their comparison with base-line population data from the census.

The Labour Market Policy Branch of the NSW Department of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education (DIRETFE) was able, under the Freedom of Information Act, to gain access to CES statistics. (Such information is only released under Freedom of Information because of a view on the part of the responsible authorities that CES figures are sometimes misunderstood and misused. Therefore all that is said in this section must be treated with much caution. The results discussed here are real figures, but care must be taken in their interpretation).

In 1991 the CES was using the following definition:

> ... The CES code as migrant disadvantaged UAP*, those registered job seekers who are considered to have significant language and/or cultural difficulties affecting their employment prospects.
> *UAP = Unemployed awaiting placement.

The following figures can be extracted from the figures for the five regions into which Sydney is divided.

| | Migrant Disadvantaged | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Males | Females | Persons | Total |
| City Eastern | 5309 | 2665 | 7974 | 40656 |
| South West Sydney | 10389 | 4733 | 15122 | 58922 |
| Western Sydney | 4071 | 1955 | 6026 | 51461 |
| Northern Sydney | 840 | 585 | 1425 | 33356 |
| Southern Sydney | 1222 | 691 | 1913 | 14088 |
| Sydney Stat. Division | 20609 | 9938 | 30547 | 184395 |

In order to get some idea of the relative proportions unemployed these numbers need to be compared against a base line figure. However, because of the lack of relationship of the CES category 'migrant disadvantaged' to ABS data, this comparison is very rough.

The closest measure that could be taken from census data would be those who spoke English 'not well or not at all'. In the twenty-one page format from the 1986 Census there is a table which gives level of English language competence for those who were born in non-English speaking countries broken down by gender and age groups which include one which covers the ages 15-64. This set of tables is available at the LGA level and so it was used to build up approximate aggregate figures for the Areas and Regions described above.

There are a number of shortcomings in this approach. First, there is no guarantee that the definition employed by individual officers at CES offices is the same as that people used in filling out their census forms. Secondly, the census results relate to the people counted in the regions concerned, the CES figures relate to the office at which the people presented themselves. Thirdly, the census figures relate to 1986 and the CES figures relate to June 1991, and unemployment is known to be highest amongst the recently arrived. Fourthly, many people are believed to fail to have their names taken off the CES lists, even after they have obtained employment.

Nevertheless, by comparing the numbers of people recorded in each area at the 1986 Census in the age group 15-64 from non-English speaking birthplaces whose level of English language competence was said to be poor with the number of people classified by the CES as being migrant clients, the following ratios appear.

The figures are first given for the total number of UAP as a ratio of the number of persons aged 15-64 counted in the area in the 1986 Census. These figures would differ from the actual unemployment levels as the base population is both affected by growth factors, due to growth in population in the past five years, and by over definition of the group, having females over the age of sixty included and all persons in the 15-19 age group even if they were not in the labour force.

What is clear from the table is the variation between the different regions of Sydney, a variation that is consistent with the other data for regional unemployment.

**Numbers of 'Unemployed awaiting placement' as a ratio of the 15-64 year-olds in the region**

| | % |
|---|---|
| City Eastern | 10.3 |
| South West Sydney | 12.8 |
| Western Sydney | 9.0 |
| Northern Sydney | 5.8 |
| Southern Sydney | 5.7 |
| Sydney Stat Division | 8.2 |

The figures for the migrant group are shown below.

**Numbers of 'Migrant UAP' as a ratio of the 15-64 year-olds in the region who speak English poorly**

| | Migrant UAP | | | Ratio for |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | total |
| City Eastern | 45 | 19 | 31 | 10.3 |
| South West Sydney | 62 | 23 | 40 | 12.8 |
| Western Sydney | 47 | 18 | 31 | 9.0 |
| Northern Sydney | 29 | 13 | 19 | 5.8 |
| Southern Sydney | 41 | 16 | 26 | 5.7 |
| Sydney Stat Division | 48 | 18 | 31 | 8.2 |

It is important to be clear again what these figures are. The figure of 45 for males in the City Eastern Area mean that the number of males on the books of the offices of the CES in the City Eastern Area (5309) is the equivalent of 45 per hundred of males counted in the area in 1986 whose stated level of English language competence was "not well" or "not at all" and who were aged 15-64.

One other measure that can be used is the total numbers from NESB rather than those whose level of English language competence is poor. The figures calculated in this way are:

**Numbers of 'Migrant UAP' as a ratio of the 15-64 year-olds NESB in the region**

| | Migrant Disadvantaged Ratio for | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Total | total |
| City Eastern | 8.6 | 4.8 | 6.8 | 10.3 |
| South West Sydney | 14.0 | 6.9 | 10.6 | 12.8 |
| Western Sydney | 6.7 | 3.5 | 5.2 | 9.0 |
| Northern Sydney | 2.3 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 5.8 |
| Southern Sydney | 5.5 | 3.3 | 4.5 | 5.7 |
| Sydney Stat Division | 8.1 | 4.2 | 6.2 | 8.2 |

The apparent differences in the proportions unemployed across regions is clear. A further important question is: does this reflect the numbers of unemployed immigrants in particular regions? or, different degrees of access to and exclusion from CES offices amongst NESB people in different regions? It would be necessary to examine different practices across CES offices in order to answer this question.

## APPENDIX J: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF MARRIED WOMEN BY AGE

For the particular NESB countries used above the changes in participation rates are given in the next table:

**Participation rate for married women aged 30-34 and 35-39 by selected birthplace**

| | Participation Rate | | | Differences | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 30-34 | 35-39 | B'twn | From | |
| Birthplace | | | rates | average | |
| Total | 56.1 | 63.1 | 7.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Australia | 55.3 | 62.8 | 7.5 | -0.8 | -0.3 |
| Overseas | 58.1 | 63.7 | 5.4 | 2.0 | 0.6 |
| NESB | 57.8 | 61.9 | 4.1 | 1.7 | -1.2 |
| Lebanon | 31.7 | 35.4 | 3.7 | -24.4 | -27.7 |
| Vietnam | 73.2 | 74.7 | 1.5 | 17.1 | 11.6 |
| Italy | 51.2 | 57.2 | 6.0 | -4.9 | -5.9 |
| Yugoslavia | 65.3 | 67.1 | 1.9 | 9.2 | 4.0 |
| Japan | 27.8 | 32.5 | 4.7 | -28.3 | -30.6 |
| India | 59.4 | 74.7 | 15.3 | 3.3 | 11.6 |

All these six birthplaces had higher participation rates for the 35-39 age group than for the 30-34 group. In passing, it should be noted that this increase was not uniform. Both Turkey and Hong Kong had lower participation rates for the 35-39 age groups than for the 30-34 age group. Of the six cases, only the rate for India increased more than the overall. In percentage points terms, the Vietnam born increased least, but this might be seen as a function of the higher starting point. The next table presents the same information for each of the three measures discussed above.

**Participation rate for married women aged 30-34 and 35-39 by selected birthplace - measures of change**

| Birthplace | Participation rate 30-34 | Participation rate 35-39 | D'frnce B'twn rates | Change in % LF & NILF Gain | Change in % LF & NILF Loss |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 56.1 | 63.1 | 7.0 | 12.5 | 19.0 |
| Australia | 55.3 | 62.8 | 7.5 | 13.6 | 20.2 |
| Overseas | 58.1 | 63.7 | 5.4 | 9.6 | 15.4 |
| NESB | 57.8 | 61.9 | 4.1 | 7.1 | 10.8 |
| Lebanon | 31.7 | 35.4 | 3.7 | 11.7 | 5.7 |
| Vietnam | 73.2 | 74.7 | 1.5 | 2.0 | 5.9 |
| Italy | 51.2 | 57.2 | 6.0 | 11.7 | 14.0 |
| Yugoslavia | 65.3 | 67.1 | 1.9 | 2.8 | 5.5 |
| Japan | 27.8 | 32.5 | 4.7 | 16.9 | 7.0 |
| India | 59.4 | 74.7 | 15.3 | 25.8 | 60.5 |

India ranks highest on each of the three measures. The 15.3 percentage point increase in the participation rate represents an effective 25.8 per cent increase in the numbers in the labour force and a 60.5 per cent decrease in the numbers not in the labour force.

The Vietnamese group scored lowest on both the number of percentage points change and on the percentage increase in numbers in the labour force. However these figures imply an effective decrease in those not in the labour force of 5.9 per cent compared with a decline of 5.5 per cent amongst those born in Yugoslavia and 5.7 per cent amongst those born in the Lebanon.

Which set of measures is used depends on the question that is being posed. Thus although the Lebanon born labour force of married women increased fivefold or sixfold compared with the Vietnam born, the 'residue' of women not in the workforce reduced at a slower rate amongst the former group.

Nevertheless there appear to be real differences to what is happening in terms of the participation of married women from different birthplace groups as they pass through their thirties. It is certainly unwise to suggest, on the basis of the last table presented, that "the differential in participation rates apparent between Australian born and migrant married women in their early thirties, has all but disappeared by the time they are in their late thirties" as was posited above on the basis of the aggregate 'overseas born' data.

A more detailed analysis of this across the whole spectrum of ages and using regional data, is possible and would most likely provide further insight into differences that exist. This flags the need to consider further such variable disaggregation in future research.

What has been done here is to use one of the existing data bases and extract differentials that relate to specific issues. The descriptive techniques that have been used are quite straightforward and easy to understand and communicate. These essential differences would have been lost in a complex multivariate analysis which might have so disguised the data that the differences would have been discarded as 'not significant'.

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the commonwealth-state council on
non-english speaking background women's issues

# Blue collar and beyond

## the experiences of non-english speaking background women in the australian labour force

# strategies for action

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# Blue Collar and Beyond

## The Experiences of
## Non-English Speaking Background Women
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# Strategies for Action

Commonwealth - State Council on Non-English Speaking Background
Women's Issues
1993

## ERRATA

p.11 Integrated Labour Market Options should read:

The Report of the Employment Skills Formation Council, entitled *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System* (known as the 'Carmichael Report') recommends the implementation by 2001 of a number of targets, including " there should be equality between young men and women in terms of overall rates of participation or levels of attainment."

In order to support DEET in implementing its responsibilities in the area of Access to and Equity within the labour market, Council proposes the following strategies:

**Australian Vocational Certificate Pilots**

**Council proposes that:**

S11 DEET consider earmarking specific places for young NESB women in accordance with their representation within that population group as a whole. NESB female youth places in the institutional and workbased areas be identified through consultation with appropriate community based organisations.

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# FOREWORD

The second Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) Women's Issues has identified employment related issues as an area where it intends to make an impact during its term of office.

Employment is arguably the single most significant item on the agenda of Australian society at this time. Council intends to deepen the debate on that agenda item with respect to the situation of NESB women. To this end, Council has commissioned a report which examines the experiences of NESB women in the context of Australia's changing economy and its associated labour market reforms.

The Report titled ***Blue Collar and Beyond***, has been prepared by Caroline Alcorso and Graham Harrison, two Sydney based researchers with considerable expertise in this field. In the light of the research highlighted in the Report, Council members developed ***Strategies for Action.*** The aim of this document is to propose to government a select range of highly targetted strategies which offer ways forward for NESB women in the workforce.

Vasiliki Nihas

**Helen L'Orange**
Chair

**Vasiliki Nihas**
Convenor
Employment Steering
Group

**Commonwealth-State Council on Non-English Speaking Background Women's Issues**

**February 1993**

# *IN SUMMARY:*
# *WE'RE NOT ALL THE SAME*

The situation of women of non-English speaking background (NESB) in regard to employment in Australia today is not the same as it is for their English Speaking Background counterparts. NESB women are more vulnerable. Without government intercession, NESB women are less likely to be on an equal footing with fellow workers in the workplaces they will share in the future. It can only be an unequal relationship unless we take up the challenge of better understanding the complexity and the needs of this group of women.

Until now we have not had a clear picture of the makeup of the group we so often conveniently categorise as NESB. NESB, although a convenient form of shorthand, belies the complexity and the vastly different experiences of the women who make up the grouping. To date, researchers and statisticians have defined the group fairly amorphously because of the methodology employed in collecting and analysing data.

Such data has to be considerably further disaggregated if it is to be of real use to policy and program designers who need to know their client group without resorting to assumptions. Further, our quantitative data base needs to be supplemented by the qualitative data available on NESB women and employment. Community-based case studies offer quite some illumination on the reality confronting those ***statistics*** we deal with so objectively.

Too many NESB women still experience disrupted and discontinuous employment careers which stop them from gaining access to 'decent' working conditions, training and promotion prospects.

Too many NESB women do not know what award restructuring means for them, do not know their rights and entitlements - or they function outside award structures entirely - a situation which promotes exploitation.

Too many NESB women experience their ethnicity used against them - ***cultural reasons*** can become an excuse for not providing necessary training -another fear is that lack of English language proficiency can be used at enterprise level to select workers for redundancy.

Too many NESB women have not shared equally in the employment growth of the 80s nor in the part-time work available in the service sector. Instead these women have carried a double load of paid and unpaid work, often without support services.

Too many NESB women have 'retired' from the formal labour force only to realise that retirement has become an exit from the labour market.

This is a waste of skills and talents - resources that can be more gainfully employed in supporting the development and growth of the Australian community and its economy. The initiatives proposed by Council as ***Strategies for Action (S1 - S20),*** represent a pragmatic, considered approach to supporting NESB women. ***Blue Collar and Beyond,*** together *with* ***Strategies for Action*** aim to see NESB women retaining their dignity, feeling valued by their community and empowered in themselves and their workplaces.

# *FINDING OUT WHAT WE DON'T KNOW*

To date, the employment situation of NESB women is not only masked but often hidden. Although we often place a greater reliance on quantitative rather than qualitative measures of data collection, the quantitative data is, in the main, insufficiently disaggregated to be helpful. It does not give us an accurate picture of the diverse needs and experiences of Australia's NESB women in the workforce. Qualitative, community-based data needs to be used in tandem with comprehensive quantitative data and be accorded equal validity by policy makers. The Report highlights these issues.

Council sees a strategic approach to the collection, processing, dissemination and availability of statistical data as a starting point in providing a clearer picture of NESB women's needs in the workforce. All government agencies have a responsibility to develop an accurate information base on their NESB women clients if they are to devise policy and programs to meet the needs of those clients in an equitable way. Minimum statistical data should, as a matter of course, include gender, birthplace, languages spoken and proficiency, English language proficiency and length of residence.

**Council proposes the following set of strategies for government consideration.**

## STRATEGIES FOR DATA COLLECTION

### Disaggregation

The use of the category 'NESB women' is an important first step to take when gathering statistical data, but can lead to an unintentional evening out and masking of the differentials between Australian born and NESB women. It ignores also the diversity within the category of 'NESB' women.

**Council proposes that:**

**S1** Government agencies at all levels, collect, analyse and make available disaggregated birthplace, length of residency and language data, rather than rely on the generic category of NESB women.

### Accurate Client Profiles

Policy makers depend on the availability of accurate, current data. Such data must be sufficiently detailed to enable effectively targeted policy formulation. Inclusion of the descriptors identified below will allow direct comparisons with ABS statistics.

**Council proposes that:**

**S2** Agencies such as DEET, ensure that their client profiles include length of residence, English language proficiency, other language competencies and birthplace data.

**Effective Comparisons**

Detailed catchment area data can be obtained by comparing CES regional unemployment records with 1986 Census data. The Census data has a category sufficiently similar to that used by the CES to generate comparative regional unemployment rates by gender and 'disadvantaged NESB' (see Appendix I).

**Council proposes that:**

**S3** June 1991 CES figures be recalibrated against 1991 census data, as soon as the latter becomes available, and the analysis of these figures extended to all CES offices in Australia.

**Maximising use of data**

Much of the existing data collected is not being used fully. There is a lack of information about its existence and it is not always available in a form readily useable to researchers and those in the community sector.

**Council proposes that:**

**S4** Mechanisms be established to provide a wider range of readily available tabulations on the information from ABS special surveys that utilize birthplace and language information that has been collected and processed.

Government agencies which collect statistical data, including birthplace and languages, produce regular information cross-classified by these variables.

Government agencies, particularly ABS, reduce the cost of their census/survey data for community organisations.

Where community organisations and their individual members have taken part in surveys and contributed to reports, purchasing costs should be waived.

**Training**

It is not only the adequacy of the data itself that concerns Council, but the way that data is collected. Council sees it as essential that ABS and other survey staff, have the training necessary to communicate across cultural and linguistic barriers so that the issues pertinent to NESB households do not become casualties of 'No response' returns.

**Council proposes that:**

**S5** ABS staff undertaking census and other survey data collection, receive training in cross-cultural communication and training in the use of interpreters.

## *EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORKPLACE*

Government commitment to microeconomic reform, or structural adjustment, incorporates a variety of strategies. These aim to make Australia more competitive through policies focusing on increased productivity in specific industries; decentralisation of industrial relations to the enterprise level; and the increase of skill and competency levels within the workforce.

The processes of award restructuring and the development of enterprise bargaining may well have considerable benefits at the workplace because of greatly reducing wage-skill levels and increasing the tasks able to be carried out by workers at those levels. However, positive outcomes are not necessarily guaranteed for NESB women given their predominance in blue collar industries which are themselves increasingly at risk because of government policy to reduce tariff protection.

NESB women have more chance than most workers of becoming casualties of the enterprise bargaining process. The Industrial Relations Commission has clearly had misgivings about the process, noting that it could not predict the extent of disadvantage which female workers were likely to experience, but accepting that there were sections of the labour force - where NESB women predominate - where they would be at a relative disadvantage in bargaining for over-award payments.

To illustrate these points, the Report makes reference to the "only detailed examination of how NESB women are positioned in relation to award and industry restructuring and the changes brought about by more automated technology" (p73). This is Yeatman's case study of the clothing industry and the conclusions she reaches are of grave concern to Council. Yeatman concludes that "NESB women may be pushed further to the periphery as industry restructuring occurs" (p74).

Yeatman paints a bleak picture of a disempowered workforce excluded from access to training, qualifications and entry award structures. The potentially most detrimental consequence for NESB women results from the move from centralised to workplace bargaining. It leaves them without the power and support of strong unions which, in the past, would have centrally negotiated wage rises that flowed on to less powerful workers. As well, although award restructuring can bring new and often more challenging jobs for NESB women, it also brings more permanent job loss for certain groups of NESB women in industry.

In this context, NESB women are particularly vulnerable and Council is committed to supporting their increased empowerment. They need access to information regarding their rights as workers, and education and training to support them in asserting their entitlements, better their workplace conditions and increase their opportunities for career path development and the training associated with multiskilling.

Access to English language training in particular is crucial to career path development for NESB women already in the workforce. The participation of women in the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL), which is jointly managed by DILGEA and DEET, will need to be monitored closely.

**In the interests of dismantling the barriers which prevent the realisation of the benfits of award restructuring flowing on to NESB women, Council offers the following strategy which it sees as central to all others arising from its Report.**

## WORKERS RIGHTS AND RESOURCES CENTRES

**Council proposes that:**

**S6** Four Workers Rights and Resources Centres be established initially in four States. The Centres could, in the first instance, be located in Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. These Centres would serve as a pilot or lighthouse project to be evaluated over a two year period, with a view to extending the project Australia wide at the end of that time.

> The Centres would, during the pilot phase specifically address themselves to the needs of NESB women. This target group could be extended to include men of NESB at a later stage.

The focus of each Centre would be to ensure that NESB women have somewhere to go to obtain current, accurate information about their own awards, workplace conditions, including information on occupational health and safety issues and training options.

> The Centres would operate an ***Awards Hotline*** which would ensure access to interpreters, trained and specialised in dealing with such information requests.

Staff at Centres would also mediate, advise or provide referral services as necessary. This would ensure that NESB women who felt that they had been discriminated against in their employment situations, would have a forum for their grievances.

> As a first task, the Centres would need to establish links to relevant community agencies and, most significantly, to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and the advisory resources of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

The Centres would also incorporate a training function for NESB women. As the Report notes; traditionally, NESB women do not avail themselves of training opportunities to the same degree as any other group in the workforce. In many cases, they do not have a past history or tradition of training and may be slower to recognise its potential value. Having access to training through the Centres is intended to lead to the increased empowerment of NESB women in the context of award restructing initiatives.

**It is envisaged that it would be both responsive and appropriate for DIR and DEET to jointly fund the Centres.**

## GO AWAY AND LEARN ENGLISH

Council's Report contends that the issue identified by NESB women as central to their chances of employment is still English language proficiency (p5). The Report highlights the fact that English proficiency varies enormously with age, regardless of the time lived in Australia. It appears that growing up in Australia however, is a key factor in whether or not women feel that they speak English well (p23).

Census data indicates, not surprisingly, that women with poor language proficiency fare much worse in occupational terms. 1986 census data shows that 80.5% were employed as trades persons, plant machine operators; drivers and labourers and related workers, compared to 45.7% of NESB women as a whole.

The Report points to studies showing that NESB women are less likely to learn English in Australia after arrival. This is partly because they are less likely to attend night classes and because the methodology used is not always appropriate to them. Childcare and transport difficulties are repeatedly quoted as barriers to taking advantage of English language learning opportunities (p69).

Unquestionably, lack of English language proficiency goes hand in hand with the disempowerment of not recognising and acting on rights at the workplace or in the labour market generally, as well as the barriers of obtaining assistance from community and social services. NESB women repeatedly cite examples of indirect discrimination evident when they're excluded from jobs by criteria which seek only those able to read and write well in English - even though those skills are not essential to carrying out the task competently.

The Ministers for ILGEA and EET recently announced a package of measures to boost English language training for NESB adult Australians, given that competency in English is central to training and skills formation. Government has made available additional funds for English language and literacy programs. These include the provision of a 510 hour entitlement to achieve functional competency in English. All incoming migrants who do not have functional English will be entitled to 510 hours of tuition. This will be free to migrants entering Australia in the preferential family, refugee, special humanitarian and special assistance categories. Their English ability will be assessed in Australia after they register for courses with the AMEP, within three months of arrival. English testing overseas is currently being piloted for migrants in other categories.

The introduction of English language testing is accompanied by the introduction of user charging. The Council notes these last two measures with concern and will monitor their implementation closely to ensure that Departmental policies as they apply to NESB women in particular, remain non-discriminatory in outcome as well as intent.

**Council proposes the following strategies for DEET and DILGEA's consideration and cooperation as appropriate.**

## LANGUAGE NEEDS

**Council proposes that:**

**S7** DEET and DILGEA standardise their indicators for assessing the English language learning needs of their clients and that these joint standards be publicised through NESB women's organisations and community groups and that DEET and DILGEA take responsibility for ongoing monitoring.

**Council proposes that:**

**S8** Given BIR research identifying women, outworkers, rural NESB populations and the aged as most severely limited in their opportunities to acquire English skills, specific funds be earmarked to target the needs of these groups. Creative options open to DILGEA include:

the incorporation of the public broadcasting system, national community radio, and talkback radio program techniques to develop open line community radio programs for the learning of English.

upgrading training for home tutors, to ensure that it includes mandatory cross-cultural communication components. Develop focus pilots specifically in rural and isolated areas where there is a critical demand.

Council is particularly concerned with the need for outcomes and comprehensive evaluation of AMES English language courses offered to date. The fact that only 22.5% of all clients reached ASLPR level 2 - (considered a prerequisite for TAFE placement) - on exit from the AMEP is particularly telling. However this statistic does not accurately reflect the gains in language proficiency achieved by clients in the AMEP, due to the fact that many do not stay for their full entitlement of hours.

A more detailed statistical breakdown is necessary to accurately reflect the participation of women in the AMEP, and the language proficiency they achieve. There is also a need to monitor closely the participation of women in the new Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program which is jointly managed by DILGEA and DEET. In 1991 females represented only 31 % of all enrolments in the former English in the Workplace Program.

**Council proposes that:**

**S9** The longitudinal survey being undertaken by BIR incorporate a specific focus to track the progress of NESB women regarding their acquisition of language and literacy skills. Outcomes should be monitored on the basis on TAFE placements and the acquisition of long term employment.

## *GETTING THE SERVICES RIGHT*

The CES has a major role to play in making employment options available to NESB women. All too often however, it seems that unemployed NESB women do not view the CES as a support service assisting them to undertake appropriate training and/or find suitable employment.

It is fair to say that the CES has come in for criticism in two areas in particular in the recent past. One area of criticism comes from employers who have not availed themselves of CES resources and expertise because they have not perceived the CES as suffficiently professional or oriented towards business and industry concerns. DEET has taken such criticism on board and moved to address employer needs, thereby ensuring that employers make greater use of CES services.

Council, however, is greatly concerned at the criticism of the CES which says it is not sufficiently client focussed nor client responsive. Council's report makes reference to *'a widely reported dissatisfaction with the CES'* (p68) and points to some aspects in particular which limit the advancement of NESB women.

These are that:

> "CES staff often reflect and reproduce the segmentation of the labour market in advising NESB women about their work options. They ignore levels of education in the women's country of origin and assume the only work they can do is factory work. The suggestion from government agencies that NESB women should not bother to look for work at all, is apparently not uncommon" (p68).
>
> There appears to be a reliance by "NESB women on informal networks, rather than formal channels, as a means of finding work" (p68).
>
> Apparently, "a recent survey of large employers corroborated workers reports that reliance on unsolicited applications and word of mouth recruiting was widespread ... and, indeed favoured by these employers, despite the obvious implications of inequity" (p68).

Clearly such practices impede the chances of NESB women's successful participation in the work force and undermine access and equity principles significantly. Council does not want Australia to lose out through the non-recognition and under-utilisation of valuable skills which could instead make a vital contribution to the Australian economy.

**In order to sponsor greater access and equity to training and employment opportunities for NESB women through the CES network, Council proposes establishing Client Liaison Units nationally. Council sees it as essential that this initiative be underpinned by DEET's assurance that cross-cultural communiction skills be designated within the range of competencies required for staff working in CES offices.**

## CLIENT LIAISON UNITS

**Council proposes that:**

**S10** Client Liaison Units, specifically geared to the needs of NESB clients, be established in each State and Territory, in line with DEET's responsibility to develop a client responsive CES network.

Council would see the first task of Client Liaison Units as the development and coordination of a *Sign-On Campaign*. The aim would be to develop an information and education strategy specifically to ensure that NESB women were aware of their rights to register with DEET as jobseekers, the value of such registration, and the difference this would make to their training and employment options. Registration with the CES is particularly valuable for NESB women in that it gives them access to the English language programs provided by DEET. These programs specifically address the English language needs of NESB jobseekers and are linked to other vocational training opportunities. Such a campaign would be national in focus and organised in conjunction with NESB women's groups such as the Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia (ANESBWA).

The Units would also take on a broad training function or role, assisting CES staff to better understand and deal with their NESB clientele and particularly with NESB women. To do this, Client Liaison Officers would develop national training modules, eg. for effective cross-cultural communication skills, geared to all CES officers.

The Client Liaison Units would also support CES staff in tracking and monitoring the effectiveness and appropriateness of CES services provided to NESB individuals, especially NESB women clients. For example, while Council applauds DEET's commitment to the use of accredited interpreters, by CES staff, it also recognises that determining when to use interpreters and knowing how to best use them, is a difficult task. For this reason, Client Liaison Units would support the CES network to make the availability of interpreting services known to its NESB clientele. As well, the Units would develop training modules to ensure that CES staff acquire the skills necessary to work effectively with interpreters.

**In short, Client Liaison Units would forge links between the CES and NESB community resources such as youth access centres, career reference centres and available settlement services. Their aim is to begin knocking down the linguistic, cultural and social barriers which disempower the CES' NESB clientele.**

## *SHARING IN A NEW START*

The Report highlights that NESB women, in the current recession, are the one group who have not maintained their share of the labour market. More and more NESB women have come into the category of ***discouraged job-seekers*** and appear to be retreating from the labour market.

NESB women entering the Australian workforce after migrating, most commonly do so either from a position of unpaid work or from a higher status occupation into a lower skilled job in manufacturing. Australia's early immigrant women share this experience with their more recently arrived counterparts. There is no evidence that women with greater prior workforce experience and a tradition of militancy and struggle do any better in finding and maintaining jobs than those with different background experiences (p71).

There are a range of factors which prevent women returning to positions of similar status to those held prior to emigration. These include: the non-recognition of overseas-gained qualifications and skills; lack of English language proficiency, compounded by lack of access to English language learning, further compounded by lack of childcare and transport difficulties; employers' pre-judgements and assumptions about NESB women's capacities to do the job. As well, organisational cultures, despite access and equity responsibilities, tend to promote ***insiders*** and exclude those seen as ***outsiders.***

It is covert and institutional discrimination which leads employers to argue ***religious and cultural beliefs*** (p74) as a justification for not offering or promoting NESB women's access to training schemes and promotional opportunities generally. As well, much inhouse training is informal and unaccredited while formal training is often inappropriate as well as inaccessible.

**Consequently, appropriate training is essential if NESB women are to share in the benefits of award restructuring. The government is clearly committed to ensuring that all Australians get their fair share of employment opportunities and the training which support them in doing so. Given this, Council sees the earmarking of funds for NESB female youth and women from existing Labour Market Programs as essential.**

### INTEGRATED LABOUR MARKET OPTIONS

In order to support DEET in implementing its responsibilities in the area of Access to and Equity within the labour market, Council proposes the following strategies:

### Australian Vocational Certificate Pilots

**Council proposes that:**

**S11** At least 50% of participants taking part in these ongoing pilots will be young women. Council therefore sees it as DEET's responsibility to earmark specific places for young NESB women in accordance with their representation within that population group as a whole. NESB female youth places in the institutional and workbased areas identified through consultation with appropriate community based organisations.

### Entry Level Training.

Young NESB women are most vulnerable to unemployment and are most likely to become *invisible* as they retreat from the labour market. They have traditionally missed out on vocational education. In some areas they face unemployment rates of 50% plus. All too often these young women do not see themselves as beneficiaries of government programs which could help them enter and become valuable members of the workforce. Information does not reach them in an accessible form, nor do they see role models who look like they do. It is critical that these young women be reached.

**Council proposes that:**

**S12** DEET allocate.target funds to market entry level training for young NESB women specifically. This marketing strategy should identify options for young NESB school leavers and utilise culturally sensitive and appropriate techniques which incorporate role models relevant to them.

### Best Practice for Women in Entry Level Training

Currently DEET has employed a researcher, based in South Australia, to document and develop models of best practice for women in entry level training for young women. It would be advantageous to build on this start.

**Council proposes that:**

**S13** DEET designate and fund an additional NESB female researcher to work with the current project officer in order to include a focus on case studies and models which identify and advise on best practice for NESB women specifically.

### Positions Vacant.

DEET has recently undertaken the production of a series titled ***Positions Vacant*** in conjunction with SBS. The Department is to be congratulated on this initiative. Council notes that it is the only program of its kind which supports NESB women to gain an understanding of and familiarity with labour market issues. That increased understanding goes part way to reducing the anxiety NESB women have in dealing with government agencies and programs responsible for dealing with employment issues.

**Council proposes that:**

**S14** DEET fund an additional 20 episode series of ***Positions Vacant*** maintaining a significant focus on NESB women and youth throughout.

Council further recommends additional funds to be made available to ensure that a reference guide indexing the programs, be made available to each high school / in Australia.

## Land Care Environment and Action Program

Council is concerned that high unemployment levels among NESB youth in rural and remote areas exacerbates social disadvantage even more so than in urban environments. The high levels of frustration which so often accompany the tension of unemployment can be ignited in small, remote communities relatively quickly. Council would see the government's LEAP as offering a special opportunity for NESB youth living in rural and remote communities.

**Council proposes that:**

**S15** DEET earmark funds through LEAP specifically for NESB youth in those rural and isolated communities with the highest levels of unemployment.

## Recognition of Prior Learning

NESB women's labour force experience is traditionally that of entering lower skill level and status jobs than those held before emigration. Moreover, the skills that NESB women bring with them as a result of their roles as caregivers and homemakers are all too often dismissed or undervalued by potential employers. Given the implications also regarding the recognition of overseas acquired skills, the issue of prior learning is critical to the capacity of NESB women to develop career path mobility.

**Council proposes that:**

**S16** DEET take responsibility for ensuring that the range of skills traditionally employed by NESB women, eg. as carers and homemakers, be included in the areas of activity to be identified under the label of *prior learning* for the purposes of accreditation.

**S17** DEET develop a resource kit, including a video which will be distributed through the Workers' Rights and Resources Centres (noted earlier p6 ). Such a resource would be targeted specifically to NESB women looking for work in order to support them to better understand the value of the skills they already have and can contribute to the Australian workforce.

## Labour Market Assistance Packages

There is a predominance of NESB women workers in manufacturing industries, eg. Textiles, Clothing and Footwear. They are affected by government policy on tariff reductions which is likely to bring about higher levels of retrenchment for NESB women. The Yeatman Report is the only research detailing the effects on the NESB female workforce in this industry and it is cited a number of times in Council's report. Council believes that NESB women who lose jobs as a result of government policy should be given top priority when it comes to developing new skills, training and employment opportunities.

**Council proposes that:**

**S18** It will further pursue the issues arising from the Yeatman Report. Council will release a series of proposed initiatives associated with this follow-up in the latter half of 1993.

### Identifying Key Competencies

Council sees it as essential for all Australians to better understand each other and to deal effectively with cultural diversity. This is a non-negotiable position given the composition of Australia's population. Not only is such a competency essential in terms of improved community relations but also in terms of improved economic efficiency and the benefits of such a spin off to Australia as a whole. Note tourism as our key growth industry.

**S19** ***Understanding and Managing Cultural Diversity*** be included as a key competency in the range of competencies currently under development by DEET.

## *WHAT MORE DO WE NEED TO KNOW?*

The Report to Council unequivocally points to increased part-time work as a major growth area in the 90s. It is likely to reshape training and work practices significantly. Both women and men are increasingly turning to part-time work options and these are likely to gain further prominence under enterprise bargaining.

Part-time work has grown in the 80s and has proved highly attractive to women. However, married NESB women working in both temporary and permanent situations have had considerably less access to this area than their ESB counterparts. Lack of suitable childcare availability seems to be a major impediment to taking advantage of part-time work.

Given the inevitability of expanding part-time work choices; training and transferability or articulation from part-time to permanent full time employment become key issues.

**Council considers it necessary to ensure that part-time work is a real choice for NESB women, and does not simply become a last resort. Council sees it as timely to begin researching the issues more fully so that we can respond to this major shift in work organisation in a considered and strategic way.**

### RESEARCH

**Council proposes that:**

**S20** DEET and /or DILGEA undertake research into part-time work which encompasses the following:

the location of NESB part-time women workers in the workforce and under what conditions they are working, ie. conditions and pay levels.

the extent of casual work across different types of part-time work.

potential and desirable areas of expansion for NESB women's involvement in part-time work and the development of strategies to facilitate entry into those areas.

the likely effects of enterprise bargaining on NESB women part-time workers.

the exploration of possible models for expanding job sharing arrangements among NESB women.This could include analysis and monitoring of various practices already being undertaken such as the establishment of small cooperatives in various communities eg. the Spanish and Latin American Association for Social Assistance (SLASA).

The establishment of seed funding for similar self-help projects to that noted above, to develop models of alternative employment.

# APPENDIX A

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COMMONWEALTH-STATE COUNCIL ON NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND WOMEN'S ISSUES

1. To provide a mechanism to advise the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments and assist in the co-ordination of policies to meet the needs of NESB women in Australia.

2. To promote equitable access to government services by NESB women and more effective services and structures through identifying particular barriers and problems, and proposing specific strategies.

3. To identify concerns and needs of NESB women for prioritising, and commission reports on how such priorities should be effectively addressed.

4. To undertake and/or promote consultation and research relevant to the above objectives.

5. To promote co-operation between all levels of government and with non-government bodies relevant to the above objectives.

6. To report annually to the Prime Minister through the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs, and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women; and to the Conference of Commonwealth/State/Territory Ministers for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs through the Minister for Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

# *APPENDIX B*

## *EMPLOYMENT STEERING GROUP*

## *AIMS AND STRATEGIES*

To improve the employment chances of our target group, NESB women, by:

developing an accurate profile of the group and its needs;

providing NESB women with a forum through which they are empowered to bring their needs to the attention of government;

ensuring that the appropriate government agencies collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data on NESB women in the workforce and on their training, retraining and employment needs;

advising State/Territory and Commonwealth bodies on effective communication and information strategies to give NESB women the best access possible to information relevant to their employment situation and their employment options;

increasing governments' understanding of the existing structural barriers which prevent NESB women from entering the workforce and/or reaching their full potential in the workforce;

getting governments to take up their responsibilities of long term monitoring of NESB women for access to and equity within the labour market; and

ensuring that government agencies review the feasibility of implementing recommendations made to date on NESB women's employment issues and commit funding as appropriate.

### *MEMBERS*

Paula Cristoffanini

Ewa Drew

Jenny Medwell

Vasiliki Nihas (Convenor)

Irene Sniatynskyj

Tran My-Van

Sema Varova

# APPENDIX C

## COMMONWEALTH-STATE COUNCIL ON NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND WOMEN'S ISSUES

**Community Members**

1. Aziza Halim (NSW)
2. Helen Chan (VIC)
3. Ewa Drew (QLD)
4. Tran My-Van (SA)
5. Shalima Fryda (WA)
6. Desiree Hathaway (NT)
7. Vasiliki Nihas (ACT)
8. Phahat Thaow (TAS)

**State/Territory Government Members**

9. Rosa Droescher
NSW Ethnic Affairs Commission
Marlene Crasovitsky
NSW Women's Co-ordination Unit, Office of Education and Youth Affairs
10. Anna Fratta
VIC Ethnic Affairs Commission
Roslyn Johnson
VIC Office of Women's Affairs
11. Irene Ciurak
Sniatynskyj
QLD Bureau of Ethnic Affairs
12. Sophie Rose
SA Department of the Premier and Cabinet
13. Paula Cristoffanini
WA Office of Multicultural Interests
Pauline Phillips
WA Office of Women's Interests
14. Jenny Medwell
NT Office of Ethnic Affairs
15. Tania Poulos
ACT Chief Minister's Department
16. Zanette Ryan
TAS Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Premier and Cabinet

**Commonwealth Government Members**

17. Helen L'Orange
Council Chairperson
Office of the Status of Women
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

18. Sema Varova
Office of Multicultural Affairs
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

19. Ann Smith
Department of Immigration, Local Government and
Ethnic Affairs

Eveline Goy
Secretariat
Office of the Status of Women
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet